



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

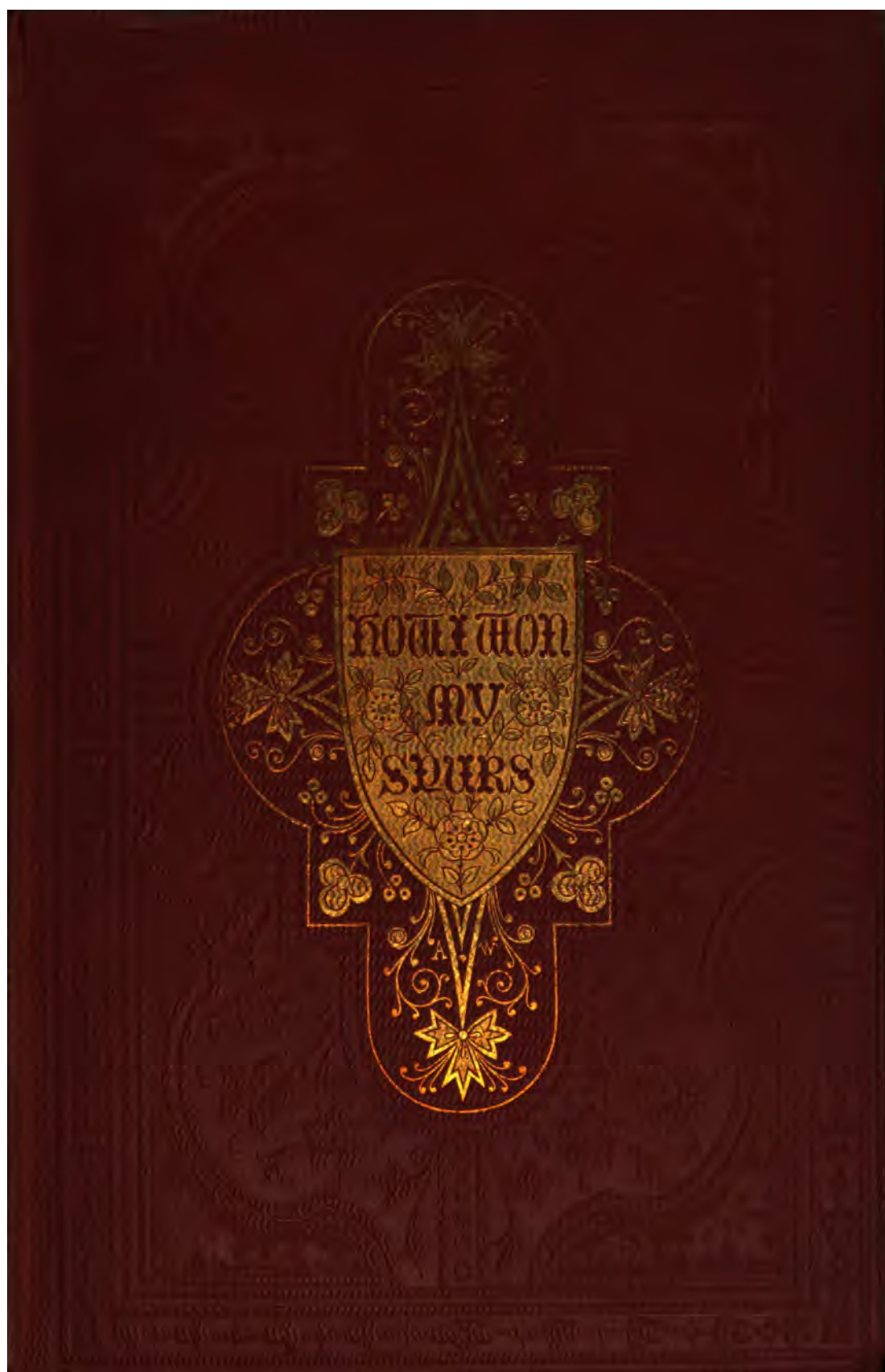
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

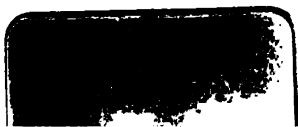
### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600071519T



LONDON: 248, Strand, W.C., April, 1864.

**BEETON'S BOOKS**  
FOR  
**SCHOOL PRIZES, ANNIVERSARY GIFTS,**  
AND  
**FAMILY READING AND REFERENCE.**

Just published, handsomely bound, cloth, bevelled boards, gilt edges, gilt back and sides, rubricated letters, 3l. 3s.; ditto, ditto, Morocco, 3l. 10s.; ditto, ditto, best Morocco, 4l. 4s.

**The Illuminated Family**

**BIBLE.** This Edition of the Sacred Volume includes a series of Biblical Cartoons by Bendemann, Bollinger, Fischer, Jäger, Kock, Overbeck, Retzel, Richter, Schubert, Schnorr, Steinle, and Strühaber. In the Ornamentation, Mr. Noel Humphreys has performed his task with a chasteness and delicacy of taste apparent in the uniform elegance of the whole volume. Rubrication has been introduced to enhance the beauty of the volume. In regard to the Notes, the theologian, the philologist, the traveller, the naturalist, and the poet—the early father and the modern divine—the ancient historian, and the recent discoverer of the remains of a hoar antiquity—have been laid under tribute to elucidate the sacred text. The authority is given for each note.

Price 15s. half roan; 18s. 6d. half calf; or in 3 vols. cloth, 18s., with Maps and Illustrations.

**Beeton's Dictionary of Uni-**

**VERSAL INFORMATION.** Complete. A to Z; comprising Geography, Biography, History, Mythology, Biblical Knowledge, Chronology, with the Pronunciation of every Proper Name.

Uniform with the above, price 15s. half roan; 18s. 6d. half calf; or in 3 vols., cloth, 18s.

**Beeton's Dictionary of Uni-**

**VERSAL INFORMATION;** comprising the Sciences, Arts, Literary Knowledge, with the Etymology and Pronunciation of every Leading Term.

Price 7s. 6d. half roan.

**Beeton's Dictionary of Uni-**

**VERSAL BIOGRAPHY.** Being the Lives of Eminent Persons of all times, with the Pronunciation of every Name.

**Beeton's Dictionary of Uni-**  
**VERSAL GEOGRAPHY.** (Uniform with the Dictionary of Biography.)  
[In the Press.]

Price 7s. 6d., half roan; 10s. 6d., half calf; with beautifully Coloured Plates, showing the Modern Modes of serving Dishes: and Illustrated with upwards of 300 Engravings.

**Mrs. Beeton's Book of House-**

**HOLD MANAGEMENT.** New Edition. Revised, Corrected, and Enlarged. With entirely new Coloured Cookery Plates, showing the modern modes of serving dishes.

Uniform with the above, price 7s. 6d. half roan, Illustrated.

**Beeton's Book of Garden**  
**MANAGEMENT.**

Uniform with the above, price 7s. 6d., half roan, Coloured Plates, and many Illustrations.

**Beeton's Book of Home Pets.**

Price 4s. 6d., cloth, gilt edges, many Illustrations, Coloured Plates.

**Beeton's Book of Birds.**

Uniform with the above, price 4s. 6d., cloth, gilt edges, Coloured Plates, and numerous Illustrations.

**Beeton's Book of Poultry**  
**AND DOMESTIC ANIMALS.**

Price 7s. 6d., cloth, gilt edges, with Maps and Coloured Plates, and a profusion of Illustrations.

**Wild Sports of the World.**

By JAMES GREENWOOD.

Uniform with "Wild Sports," price 7s. 6d., cloth, gilt edges, Illustrated.

**Danes, Saxons, & Normans;**

or, *Anglo-Saxons* By J. G. Es



*Beeton's Books for School Prizes, Anniversary Gifts, &c.*

Uniform with "Wild Sports," price 7s. 6d., cloth, gilt edges, Coloured Plates.

**Phaulcon the Adventurer;**

or, *The Europeans in the East.* By WILLIAM DALTON, Author of "Will Adams, the First Englishman in Japan."

Uniform with "Wild Sports," price 7s. 6d., cloth, gilt edges, Illustrated.

**The Fife and Drum; or,**

*Would Be a Soldier.* By Sir LASCELLES WRAXALL, Bart.

Uniform with "Wild Sports of the World," price 7s. 6d., gilt edges, separate Tinted and Coloured Plates.

**Robinson Crusoe.** With a Memoir of the Author.

Uniform with "Wild Sports of the World," price 7s. 6d., cloth, gilt edges, Coloured Plates, and a profusion of Illustrations.

**Curiosities of Savage Life.** First Series. By the Author of "Wild Sports of the World."

Uniform with "Wild Sports of the World," price 7s. 6d., cloth, gilt edges, Coloured Plates, and a profusion of Illustrations.

**Curiosities of Savage Life.** Second Series. By the Author of "Wild Sports of the World."

Uniform with "Wild Sports of the World," price 7s. 6d., cloth, gilt edges, Illustrated with numerous Engravings.

**How I Won My Spurs; or, a Boy's Adventures in the Barons' Wars.** By J. G. EDGAR.

Uniform with "How I Won my Spurs," price 7s. 6d., cloth, gilt edges, Illustrated with numerous Engravings.

**Cressy and Poitiers; or, the Story of the Black Prince's Page.** By J. G. EDGAR.

Uniform with "Wild Sports of the World," price 7s. 6d., cloth, gilt edges, well illustrated.

**Western Lands and Western Waters.** By FRED. GERSTACKER. With Memoir of Author.

Uniform with "Wild Sports of the World," price 7s. 6d., cloth, gilt edges, Illustrated with numerous Engravings.

**The Adventures of Reuben DAVIDGER,** Seventeen Years and Four Months a Captive among the Dyaks of Borneo. By the Author of "Wild Sports of the World." [*In the Press.*]

Price 5s., cloth, lettered, 620 pp.

**Life of Napoleon Bonaparte.**

By J. S. C. ABBOTT.

Price 5s., cloth, gilt edges, 24 separate Plates, and beautifully Illustrated.

**The Boy's Own Volume.**

(Midsummer, 1863.) A Book of Fact, Fiction, History, and Adventure. Edited by the Publisher.

Price 5s., uniform with the Midsummer volume.

**The Boy's Own Volume.**

(Christmas, 1863.) A Book of Fact, Fiction, History, and Adventure. Edited by the Publisher.

Price 8s. 6d., cloth, gilt edges, 48 separate Plates, and beautifully Illustrated.

**The Boy's Own Volume** for 1863. Being the Midsummer and Christmas volumes bound in one.

Price 21s., cloth, lettered, the complete set of Eight Vols.; or 3s. each Single Volume.

**The Boy's Own Magazine.**

FIRST SERIES, 1855-1862.

[Only a few sets left.]

Price 3s. 6d., neatly bound in cloth, lettered.

**Prize Papers,** written on various Subjects, during the year 1863, for the **Boy's Own Magazine.**

Price 2s., cloth, lettered.

**The Boy's Yearly Book.**

Being the Twelve Numbers of the **Boy's Penny Magazine** (from January to December, 1863).

Price 5s. each, cloth, lettered, Vols. I. to VIII.

**The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine.** (New Series.)

Price 5s., cloth, lettered.

**The Rise of the Dutch Republic.**

By JOHN LOTHROP MOTLEY.

Price 3s. 6d., cloth, lettered, fully illustrated with Diagrams and Woodcuts.

**Beeton's Handybook of**

**GAMES.** Comprising Billiards, Bagatelle, Chess, Whist, Loo, Cribbage, etc. By Captain CRAWLEY.

*Beeton's Books for School Prizes, Anniversary Gifts, &c.*

## THE SHILLING SERIES.

**British Song Birds.** Coloured Plates. Many Woodcuts.

**British Song and Talking BIRDS.** Coloured Plates. Many Woodcuts.

**The Parrot Tribes, Hawks, AND OWLS.** Coloured Plates. Many Woodcuts.

**Birds' Nests and Eggs.** TAXIDERM Y (Bird Stuffing). Coloured Plate. Woodcut.

**Poultry and Pigeons.** Coloured Plates. Many Woodcuts.

**Dogs and Cats.** Coloured Plate. Many Woodcuts.

**Rabbits, Hares, Hedgehogs, SQUIRRELS, MICE, TORTOISES.** Coloured Plate. Many Woodcuts.

**Bees, Silkworms, Inhabitants OF THE AQUARIUM, FERNS.** Many Woodcuts.

**The Englishwoman's Cook-ERY BOOK.** 50th Thousand By Mrs. ISABELLA BEETON. Amply Illustrated.

**The Young Reporter.** Fifth Edition. A Practical Guide to the Art and the Profession of Short-hand Writing. With a Copious Dictionary of Latin Quotations, &c.

**Billiards: its Theory and PRACTICE;** with the Scientific Principle of the Side Stroke. By Captain CRAWLEY. Illustrated with thirty-four Diagrams. Cloth, lettered. 7th Edition.

**Modern Method of Training FOR RUNNING, WALKING, ROWING, and BOXING:** including Hints on Exercise, Diet, Clothing, and Advice to Trainers. By CHARLES WESTHALL, the Pedestrian Champion of England. 3rd edition, cloth, lettered.

**Whist, Loo, and Cribbage.** By Captain CRAWLEY. Cloth, lettered. 7th Edition.

**Chess and Draughts.** By Captain CRAWLEY. Illustrated with forty-seven Problems. Cloth, lettered. 8th Edition.

**Backgammon.** By Captain CRAWLEY. Illustrated. Cloth, lettered. 5th Edition.

**Beeton's Book of Anecdote, WIT, and HUMOUR.** Being a Collection of Wise and Witty Things in Prose and Verse; together with a Collection of Curious Epitaphs.

**The Kiddle-a-Wink; or, Ghostly Stories on the Western Coast.** By FRANCIS DERRICK.

## S. O. BEETON'S SERIALS.

PRICE 6d. MONTHLY.

**The Englishwoman's DOMESTIC MAGAZINE.**

PRICE 6d. MONTHLY.

**THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE ENGLISH-WOMAN'S DOMESTIC MAGAZINE.**

In 3d. Fortnightly Parts. Completed in 18 Parts.

**Beeton's Books of Home GAMES.**

PRICE 6d. MONTHLY.

**The Boy's Own Library.** A Series of Books for Youth. The volume now publishing is "STORIES OF THE WARS." By JOHN TILLOSON.

PRICE 3d. MONTHLY.

**The Boy's Monthly Magazine**

Subscription; One Shilling.

**A Shakspeare Memorial.**  
[Early in April.]

*Beeton's Books for School Prizes, Anniversary Gifts, &c.*

PRICE 6d. MONTHLY.

**The Boy's Own Magazine.**

An Illustrated Journal of Fact, Fiction, History, and Adventure.

In Penny Weekly Parts. To be completed in 100 Parts.

**Beeton's Dictionary of Uni-**

**VERSAL INFORMATION IN SCIENCE, ART, AND LITERATURE;** with the Pronunciation of every Leading Term. This Dictionary is uniform with "Beeton's Dictionary of Universal Information in Geography, Biography, History, Mythology, Bible Knowledge, and Chronology." Thus the one supplies Facts in so far as they relate to the *Names of Persons and Places*; and the other in so far as they relate to *Things*. Part I. published with the Magazines for April, 1864.

In Shilling Monthly Parts. To be completed in 10 Parts.

**Shakspeare's Plays & Poems.**

Printed in a new type. The principal Plays illustrated by Chromo-Lithographs executed by Messrs. Day and Son, after Robert Dudley, Esq.

[Part I. ready on *St. George's Day, April 23rd, the 300th Anniversary of the Poet's Birth.*]

Published every Year, price One Shilling

**Beeton's Christmas Annual.**

Contains Tales by eminent Authors, illustrated by the best Artists. Also Charades, Enigmas, Hieroglyphics, Illustrated Proverbs, Acting Charades, Drawing-room Extravaganzas, and various contributions to Christmas gaiety and enjoyment. Fourth season, published December 1, 1863. First, Second, and Third Seasons are still in print.

Uniform with "Household Management." In Sixpenny Monthly Parts. To be completed in 8 Parts.

**Beeton's Book of Garden**

**MANAGEMENT AND RURAL ECONOMY,** illustrated with several hundred Engravings.

[Part I. with the *May Magazines*.]

In Penny Weekly Parts. To be completed in 24 Parts.

**Beeton's Bird Book.** Show-

ing how to Rear and Manage Birds in Sickness and in Health. With many Illustrations and Coloured Frontispiece.

[Part I., with Coloured Frontispiece, with the *April Magazines*.]

In Threepenny Monthly Parts. To be completed in 12 Parts.

**All About It; or, Mrs. Beeton's**

Dictionary of Every-day Cookery.

[Part I. with the *April Magazines*.]

To be completed in 25 Penny Weekly Parts.

**Robinson Crusoe, By DANIEL**

**DEFEO.** With a Memoir of the Author. Part I. contains Sixteen Pages, beautifully printed; a splendid Coloured Frontispiece; and a separate Tinted Plate. Part II. contains a Tinted Plate, and every Fourth Part after Part II. likewise includes a Tinted Plate.

Uniform with "Robinson Crusoe." To be completed in 28 Weekly Parts of 16 pages, price One Penny each.

**Wild Sports of the World,**

A Book of Natural History and Adventure.

[First Penny Part with the *March Magazines*.]

In Penny Weekly Parts, and Sixpenny Monthly Parts.

**Gulliver's Travels, By DEAN**

**SWIFT.** With Engraving on nearly every page, and Coloured Frontispiece and Title-page.

[First Penny Part, including Coloured Frontispiece, ready with the *May Magazines*.]

In Sixpenny Monthly Parts. To be completed in Nine Parts.

**Stories of the Wars. By**

**JOHN TILLOTSON.** With Woodcuts and separate Tinted and Coloured Plates.

*A Liberal Discount will be deducted in cases of Principals of Schools, Ushers, Book Clubs, &c., buying a number of Beeton's Books, for purposes of Prizes, Charity, or Otherwise.*





## HOW I WON MY SPURS.



# HOW I WON MY SPURS;

OR,

A BOY'S ADVENTURES

IN THE BARONS' WARS.

BY

J. G. EDGAR,

AUTHOR OF "DANES, SAXONS, AND NORMANS," "BOYHOOD OF GREAT MEN,"  
"CAVALIERS AND ROUNDHEADS," &c. &c.

*Illustrated by Numerous Woodcuts,*

FROM DESIGNS PRINCIPALLY BY R. HUTTULA & J. C. DANBY.

LONDON:

S. O. BEETON, 248, STRAND, W.C.

1863.

250. a. 114.





## PREFACE.

---

NOBODY competent to form an opinion on such a subject will deny that, among the civil conflicts recorded in our annals, the great struggle, known as the Barons' War, which, in the middle of the thirteenth century, agitated the people of England and excited the princes of Europe, was one of the most important and interesting. An ancient monarchy struggling desperately to free itself from the feudal and ecclesiastical trammels of which it was, with good reason, ashamed, and to ally itself closely with the intelligence of the nation with which it was associated by a host of traditions, and resolutely opposed in its efforts by a selfish aristocracy, and an ignorant democracy, would, under any circumstances, be an exciting spectacle to the mind's eye. But in this case, the scene derives additional interest from the characters and careers of the men who were the heart and soul of the hostile parties; for the heroes of the hostile parties were men no less famous than Simon de Montfort, the renowned Earl of Leicester, who was regarded as a saint and a martyr, and that mighty prince who figures so conspicuously in English history as Edward the First, and who rendered himself the pride of England and the terror of her foes.\*

---

\* "He was surnamed Longshanks, his step being another man's stride; and he was very high of stature; and though oftentimes such who are built four stories high are observed to have very little in their cockloft, yet he was a most

In the following pages, the heir of one of those great Norman families whose chiefs had been fortunate enough to strengthen their position in England by allying themselves with that race which for six centuries had given kings and nobles to the British Isles, tells the story of his own adventures in the armed conflict between monarchy and oligarchy, and what he did, and saw, and suffered. Naturally, he writes in the spirit of a partisan. Nevertheless, I cannot but express a hope that the narrative—whatever its faults and imperfections—will be found such as to convey to the reader a clear notion of the most important events of the Barons' War from the day on which Simon de Montfort raised the royal standard against the third Henry to the day on which the able and ambitious earl was baffled and beaten by Prince Edward in the ever-memorable battle of Evesham.

J. G. E.

---

judicious man in all his undertakings—equally wise to plot as valiant to perform ; under Divine Providence happy in success at sea, at land ; at home, and abroad ; in war, and in peace. He was so fortunate with his sword at the beginning of his reign, that he awed all his enemies with his scabbard before the end."—Fuller's *Worthies of England*.

"Since the Conquest, he was the first king of his name, and the first that settled the law and state (deserving the title of England's Justinian), and that freed this kingdom from the wardship of the peers ; showing himself in all his actions after, capable to command not the realm only, but the whole world."—Fuller's *Holy War*.

# ANALYSIS OF CONTENTS.

## CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
SAVED FROM THE WRECK :—Walter Merley—Ralph Merley's birth—Walter Merley starts for England—The "Christopher" strikes—Ralph Merley's mother—Her death .....	1

## CHAPTER II.

THE MERLEYS :—Northumberland conquered—Ralph de Merley—Roger and Walter de Merley—Roger de Merley's dislike of Ralph Merley—Dame Juliana's partiality to Ralph—Destined for the church .....	8
--	---

## CHAPTER III.

MY LIFE AT LINDEN :—My personal appearance—I go to Linden—Master Robert—His severity—My liking for the church .....	13
---	----

## CHAPTER IV.

A KNIGHT-ERRANT :—An arrival—Sir Rufus Ribaut—A mad knight—His enmity to Walter de Merley—A love passage—My grandmother's anger—I long for an apprenticeship to chivalry.....	18
---	----

## CHAPTER V.

THE SCHOOLS AT OXFORD :—Dame Juliana's opposition to my chivalric aspirations—Roger de Merley refuses to receive me as a pupil—Oxford—The seeds of misrule—The Parisian students are invited to Oxford—Stephen Fitz-Scrob—Riots .....	25
---	----

## CHAPTER VI.

THE SCHOLARS AND THE LEGATE :—The papal legate—The students repulsed—Anger of the students—The Irish chaplain—My cheek is burned—"Down with Nabuzardan"—The search after the legate—The students' remorse .....	31
---	----

## CHAPTER VII.

THE LEGATE'S ESCAPE, AND MY OWN :—The legate escapes—The king's wrath—I determine to fly—My journey north—Dame Juliana's surprise—Cospatrick's war-steeds—My pardon .....	39
---	----

## CHAPTER VIII.

MY KINSMAN'S CASTLE:—I arrive at the castle of Roger Merley de Merley—Sir John de Plessy—His kindness—The castles of the Anglo-Norman barons—Customs of the feudal barons—The tilt-yard—My uncle's coldness .....	PAGE 45
---	------------

## CHAPTER IX.

AN ADVENTURE IN THE CHASE:—Privilege of hunting in the king's forests—I accompany my uncle in hunting—I lose the hunting party—The hawking party—A demoiselle in danger—My encounter with the boar—My first interview with King Henry .....	52
---	----

## CHAPTER X.

THE FIRST OF MAY:—May-day preparations—My popularity—Conan de Gael—My quarrel with Conan de Gael—I am reproved by Roger Merley de Merley—I determine to leave my uncle's castle .....	60
---	----

## CHAPTER XI.

THE CRISIS:—King Henry's marriage—The queen's kindred—Discontent of the populace—A quarrel in parliament—The parliament at Oxford—Enmity between the king and the Londoners—The queen's unpopularity—Henry resumes his authority—Good-bye to Morpeth .....	67
--	----

## CHAPTER XII.

WOLVES IN ENGLAND:—England in the reign of Henry III.—The wolves dangerous—The sanctuary of Flixton—The wolves extirpated .....	77
---	----

## CHAPTER XIII.

MY ADVENTURE WITH WOLVES:—The chapmen—Reflections—Chased by wolves—My horse is lame—"Up a tree"—Night watches .....	82
---	----

## CHAPTER XIV.

A RESCUE AND A RECOGNITION:—Morning—Still watched—Rescue at hand—John Fitz-John—My horse safe—We start for London .....	90
---	----

## CHAPTER XV.

OLD ACQUAINTANCES:—I recount my adventures to John Fitz-John—We meet Sir Rufus Ribaut—Stephen Fitz-Scrob in a new guise—News—London in a ferment—A message from De Montfort—The "White Horse" hostelry .....	96
--	----

## CHAPTER XVI.

A SURPRISE AFTER SUPPER:—John Fitz-John marvels at my taking the king's side—A debate—Henry's love for the people—Difference of opinion—A compact—Baronial agents—A surprise—Simon de Montfort .....	103
--	-----

CHAPTER XVII.

<b>SIMON DE MONTFORT:</b> —De Montfort's influence in England—De Montfort's parentage—His reception in England—Is married to the Countess of Pembroke—Obtains a dispensation from the Pope—His unpopularity—King Henry's antipathy to him—De Montfort flies to France—Is appointed governor of Gascony—De Montfort sides with the Barons—Is prominent among the malcontents—Gains the favour of the Anglo-Norman barons .....	PAGE 109
---	-------------

CHAPTER XVIII.

<b>FLINT MEETS STEEL AND FIRE FLIES:</b> —Fitz-John's discomposure—Who am I!—Questioned—The flint is struck—My answer to De Montfort—Sentenced to be hanged—Not hanged, but imprisoned—De Montfort makes another foe .....	118
--	-----

CHAPTER XIX.

<b>MY ESCAPE:</b> —My rage at being imprisoned—A recognition—Gamel Goodrick—Gamel helps me to escape—His story—Repinings for the North—I warn Gamel against De Montfort—My journey's end—The farrier's house—My introduction to the farrier and his wife .....	124
--	-----

CHAPTER XX.

<b>THE FARRIER OF THE STRAND:</b> —The farrier's personal appearance—I express my political opinions—Am cautioned by Walter not to express them too loudly—My plan of government—Its obstacles—The citizens determine to defend the Provisions of Oxford—Prince Edward in disgrace with the citizens—The royal cause looks bad—Batchellors .....	131
--	-----

CHAPTER XXI.

<b>LONDON:</b> —London insignificant—The Strand to Westminster—The palace of the Savoy—The Temple—The walls of London—Ludgate—Batchellor patrols—Demagogues—Walter gives me a word or two of advice—Promises to present me to the prince—Walter a royalist.....	138
---	-----

CHAPTER XXII.

<b>THE JEWS IN DANGER:</b> —Walter has misgivings about the Jews—Richard de Clare and the Jew of Tewkesbury—The Jews in favour with King Alphonso of Castile .....	149
--	-----

CHAPTER XXIII.

<b>THE MIDNIGHT MASSACRE:</b> —I am bolted in my room—Walter makes his apologies—The Jews attacked—Death of Kokben Abraham—Sir Rufus Ribaut a demagogue—Walter's anxiety—His weapon—Fitz-John in love .....	150
---	-----

CHAPTER XXIV.

<b>THE QUEEN AND THE LONDONERS:</b> —Our walk to the City—The Londoners are incensed against the queen—The queen tries to leave the Tower	
---	--

—Is assailed by the mob—The mayor arrives—The disturbance is quelled—The queen and her ladies find refuge in the palace of the Bishop of London .....	PAGE 155
---	-------------

CHAPTER XXV.

THE ROAD TO RENOWN :—I am taken for one of the nobles of Simon de Montfort's faction—The Batchellors seize one of the queen's ladies—I interfere—Stephen Fitz-Scrob arrives—Fitz-Scrob endeavours to appease the Batchellors—We gain admittance to the bishop's palace—My disap- pointment at hearing the lady's name.....	161
--	-----

CHAPTER XXVI.

ROYALTY IN DISTRESS :—The bishop's gentlemen—I relate my adventures —Am summoned to the queen's presence—Queen Eleanor—My intro- duction to the queen—Margaret Bisset, the holy maid—I am sent to Windsor by the queen—Matthew Beke aids me to escape from the bishop's palace .....	166
--	-----

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE RIDE TO WINDSOR :—Walter and I start for Windsor—Friends or foes—Explanations—Retaliation—A job for Walter—He declines it— My introduction to Prince Edward .....	174
---	-----

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PRINCE EDWARD :—His personal appearance—His education—His respect for England—Why he fought—His horsemanship—Edward is in trouble at the time of my introduction to him—Edward will not consent to vio- late the provisions of Oxford—Obtains a bull from the Pope—Edward obtains money of the Templars—Discontent in consequence .....	187
---	-----

CHAPTER XXIX.

AT WINDSOR :—My reception by the prince—I offer my services to Prince Edward, and they are accepted—A marvellous escape—I accompany the prince and Earl Warren on a hawking party—I relate my story to the prince—The prince and Earl Warren disagree—Reconciliation .....	188
---	-----

CHAPTER XXX.

HUGH BISSET :—The pastimes of Windsor—Hugh Bisset accosts me— Hugh Bisset's ancestry—Bisset, after his wife's death, takes the cross— His achievements in the East—Joins the Emperor Frederick against the Pope—Returns to England—His recklessness brings discredit on the prince's service—His fondness for his daughter—Her influence on him...	193
--	-----

CHAPTER XXXI.

OPENING OF THE WAR :—The mock parliament at Oxford—De Montfort not scrupulous—De Montfort approaches London—A truce—Proclama- tion against foreigners—The king's parliament at Reading—I go out recruiting—Our fight at De Clare's castle at Kingston—I am commis- sioned to endeavour to gain over the capital to the royal cause .....	198
--	-----

## CHAPTER XXXII.

THE COUNTESS OF SALISBURY :—I am in love with the Countess of Salisbury—Ancestry of the Countess of Salisbury—Fair Rosamond—William Longsword—Beauty of Margaret, Countess of Salisbury—Conan de Gael arrives from the north—His antipathy to me—I am a favourite with the queen—She laughs at my boyish passion—The countess's emotion—My interview with the countess—Hugh Bisset gives me a word or two of advice.....	PAGE 205
--	-------------

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE PLOT OF JOHN DE GIZORS :—My plans for gaining the capital receive the prince's sanction—I take up my residence at the house of Walter the Farrier—Some of the citizens are for admitting the king—We determine to shut De Montfort out of London—Our plan—Conan de Gael is sent by the king—My misgivings .....	213
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

GOING THROUGH FIRE AND WATER :—The races at Smithfield—I anxiously await Walter's return—Betrayed by De Gael—I am forced to fly—I clear the crowd and go towards the "White Horse" hostelry—The wood on fire—I charge through it—I kill my horse and take a bath—I reach the "White Horse," and am admitted .....	218
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXXV.

MY RECOVERY :—I recover consciousness—Walter escapes scot-free—John de Gizors is fined—Hugh Bisset visits me—He congratulates me—The royalists retreat—A truce is made—Bisset gives me intelligence of the Countess of Salisbury—Bisset's repinings .....	225
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXVI.

EVENTS OF THE WINTER :—The conference at Amiens—King Louis' decision—The barons will not agree to his decision—The lords of the north arm for the king—John Gifford sacks Gloucester—The defence of the castle—The Earl of Derby comes to Gifford's aid—I am visited by Walter—More news—The rebellious citizens—A message from Bisset—My dream—I set out for Oxford .....	232
--	-----

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE ROYALISTS AT OXFORD :—Oxford in 1260—Prince Edward congratulates me on my escape—Bisset's tidings—The scholars in revolt—Marmaduke Twenge's misgivings—I meet Marmaduke Twenge and Aymer de Maxwell—Sir Hugh Gubium—We depart from Oxford.....	240
--	-----

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

NORTHAMPTON :—The vicissitudes of Northampton—Its importance—Situation—Gates of the town—The castle—The garrison is summoned to surrender—The scholars of Oxford—The king's indignation .....	247
---	-----



## CHAPTER XXXIX.

	PAGE
THE ASSAULT :—Philip Basset makes a breach—Preparations for the assault	
—Simon de Montfort the younger is taken prisoner—I deliver my message to the justiciary—Flight of the baronial warriors—The pursuit—Sir Hugh Gubium—Our encounter—Hugh Gubium is taken prisoner—The royal army are over-confident ..	253

## CHAPTER XL.

MARCH OF THE ROYALISTS :—Nottingham is taken—The king marches to relieve Rochester—Rochester in danger—De Montfort abandons the siege—The march through Kent—Tunbridge Castle is taken—The king makes Lewes his head-quarters ..	261
--	-----

## CHAPTER XLI.

RAIDS AND REPRISALS :—Robert Ferrars, Earl of Derby—Derby and De Montfort sack Worcester and massacre the Jews—Prince Edward marches to reduce Lord Derby—Tutbury is demolished—John Gifford takes Warwick Castle—We return to Lewes.....	266
---	-----

## CHAPTER XLII.

A COLLOQUY :—Lewes in 1264—Negotiations—Old friends—Banter—Marmaduke Twenge seeks my advice—The Breton's letter—I counsel Marmaduke to take no heed of it—The result of the negotiations.....	271
---	-----

## CHAPTER XLIII.

THE EVE OF BATTLE :—Prince Edward's misgivings—Conduct of the royalist chiefs—The prince's commands—The baronial camp—De Montfort's hypocrisy—We ride back—The skirmish on Plumpton Plain—The prowess of the royalists—The prince has presentiments of defeat .....	277
---	-----

## CHAPTER XLIV.

MORNING :—My gloomy cogitations—Bisset's advice—I set out to survey the enemy—My tender thoughts—I discover Conan de Gael and Marmaduke Twenge—De Gael's proposition to Marmaduke—His indignant refusal of De Gael's terms—Treachery—Merley to the rescue!—The encounter and escape.....	285
--	-----

## CHAPTER XLV.

THE ALARM AND THE ARRAY :—I relate the result of my observations to the prince—We give the alarm—De Montfort halts on Plumpton Plain—Plan of De Montfort's army—The king's array—My place in the battle	293
---	-----

## CHAPTER XLVI.

THE BATTLE OF LEWES :—Aspect of De Montfort's army—The prince's anger at their hypocrisy—The king's defiance—The charge—Rout of the cavalry—De Montfort's standard captured—We charge upon the Londoners—The citizens run—The pursuit—My appearance at Lewes—We return to the field of battle—All lost ! .....	296
--	-----

CHAPTER XLVII.

	PAGE
THE LOST FIELD :—Appearance of the field on our return from pursuing the Londoners—De Montfort perceives his advantage—The King of the Romans' division is repulsed—King Henry is taken prisoner—Philip, Lord Basset, and Marmaduke Twenge, are captured—De Montfort sends to seize the castle of Lewes—The defence and repulse—Edward wishes to renew the conflict—His friends' opposition—De Montfort's answer to Edward's challenge—The earls Warren and Pembroke leave the royalists—My advice to the prince .....	302

CHAPTER XLVIII.

FROM FIELD TO FORTRESS :—The treaty—Bisset and I determine to go to Northampton—We seek Prince Edward—A letter from Fitz-John—My implacable foes—Prince Edward gives me a horse—We set out from the castle, and are pursued—Our flight—Overtaken—Timely rescue—We conceal ourselves in a forester's cottage—Bisset longs for France—We arrive at Northampton—Bisset's experiments .....	308
---	-----

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE CONSPIRACY :—De Montfort marches to Northampton—Our plan for De Montfort's fall—We draw lots for our respective destinations—The oath.....	315
--	-----

CHAPTER L.

THE REACTION :—Sir Warren Basingbourne marches to Wallingford to release Prince Edward—The answer of the garrison—De Montfort's flattery—Discontent in the land—De Montfort gives the prince a conditional liberty—The Lord Marchers set De Montfort at defiance—De Montfort imprisons the Earl of Derby—De Clare's tilting-match stopped by De Montfort—De Clare's quarrel with De Montfort—A bait—Disappointed—Our plan miscarries—De Clare's doubts as to his oath at Oxford—My answer to him.....	319
---	-----

CHAPTER LI.

A FRIEND INDEED :—My reflections during my ride to Wigmore—An interruption—The stranger's familiarity with my affairs—Simon Curlevache—His plan for the prince's escape—I give him a letter for the prince—I arrive at Wigmore—The earls Warren and Pembroke land in Wales—My expectations.....	327
---	-----

CHAPTER LII.

PRINCE EDWARD'S ESCAPE :—Prince Edward takes his equestrian exercise—Proposes that his guards shall ride races—A yeoman offers his horse to the prince—Edward mounts and tries his paces—Bids adieu to his guards—Towards Tullington Wood—De Roos's indignation with me—From Wigmore to Ludlow—Reconciliation between Prince Edward and De Clare—Recruits—News of De Montfort—Gloucester to be taken—I despatch Simon Curlevache to watch Simon de Montfort the younger.....	333
--	-----

## CHAPTER LIII.

	PAGE
SIEGES AND SKIRMISHES:—De Montfort removes from Hereford to Worcester—My duties at Worcester—Prince Edward and De Clare take Gloucester—De Montfort takes the Castle of Hulks—Edward recovers Hulks—De Montfort's ships destroyed at Bristol—De Montfort goes to Newport—Besieged at Newport, De Montfort escapes to Wales—Ravages de Clare's lands—His soldiers grumble at the Welsh fare—Returns to Hereford—Prince Edward returns to Worcester.....	339

## CHAPTER LIV.

ARRIVALS AT WORCESTER:—My cousin, Giles Merley, brings his uncle's retainers to Worcester—I hear of Sir Roger Merley de Merley's death, and Marmaduke Twenge's marriage—My cousin's reinforcements—Old acquaintances—Prince Edward's gratification at the northern horse—De Montfort's bribe to Llewellyn, Prince of Wales—News from Simon Curlevache—Simon de Montfort the younger's doings—John Gifford and De Clare arrive .....	343
---	-----

## CHAPTER LV.

NEWS AND PREPARATIONS:—Simon Curlevache arrives—I conduct him to Prince Edward—News of Simon de Montfort the younger—The prince determines to attack Kenilworth—Summons a council—I am ordered to take command of the van of the attacking force—Edward's advice—De Montfort in danger .....	348
--	-----

## CHAPTER LVI.

OUR RIDE TO KENILWORTH:—The Castle of Kenilworth—The carelessness of the garrison—An unlucky omen—Absence of guards—The carnage—My attempts to stop it—Young Simon de Montfort escapes—The prince arrives—I win my spurs—Prince Edward wishes to save De Montfort's life .....	352
--	-----

## CHAPTER LVII.

A PAUSE AND A NIGHT MARCH:—The prince visits my apartments—I reconnoitre—We have a skirmish with Humphrey Bohun the younger—Stephen Fitz-Scrob is taken prisoner—I gain from him important news—I commission Gamel Goodrick to hang him in case of the falsity of his information—The cavalry are placed under my command—The prince's address to the soldiers—Our night march—De Montfort is doomed .....	358
--	-----

## CHAPTER LVIII.

DE MONTFORT AT EVESHAM:—De Montfort reaches Evesham—Evesham Abbey—Tidings of the royalists—De Montfort reproaches his sons—Discontent in the baronial camp—Henry de Montfort counsels his father to escape—The baronial army prepare for battle—Edward arrays the royal army—The battle commences .....	363
---	-----

## CHAPTER LIX.

OUR CHARGE:—My squadron of horse charge the Welsh under Humphrey Bohun the younger—The Celts are dispersed—Death of Simon Carlevache—Surrounded—We charge through the enemy and escape unhurt—My feelings of pride at the achievement—Hugh Bisset dies.....	PAGE 368
---	-------------

## CHAPTER LX.

THE BATTLE OF EVESHAM:—The conflict becomes general—Prince Edward disperses the Welsh division—The enemy attempt to recover the wood—I frustrate their intention—De Montfort addresses his army—Walter the Farrier and Gamel Goodrick take their leaves of me—We surround the baronial host—I am commissioned to look to the king's safety—I arrive just in time to save the king—The king thanks me—The prince orders me to attempt to save De Montfort's life .....	374
---	-----

## CHAPTER LXI.

THE END OF DE MONTFORT:—The spot where De Montfort died—I endeavour to make myself heard, but am unable—De Montfort gives his standard to Conan de Gael—No mercy for De Montfort—The finish of the battle .....	381
---	-----

## CHAPTER LXII.

THE COURT AT ELTHAM:—I am sent to St. Alban's to administer justice—Am recalled to Eltham—The country begins to assume its peaceful aspect—Want of accommodation in the palace—I have an interview with Margaret Bisset—The prince seeks my presence—He informs me of my parentage and of the betrothal of the Countess of Salisbury—My despondency—I am startled in my reverie.....	384
--	-----

## CHAPTER LXIII.

AN UNWELCOME GUEST:—A stranger demands the crown of King Henry—Is turned out of the palace—Margaret Bisset is interrupted in her devotions—I arrive in time to save her from Sir Rufus Ribaut—My struggle with Sir Rufus—I deliver him over to the king's servants—I am sorry for Sir Rufus Ribaut .....	390
--	-----

## CHAPTER LXIV.

ALARMS AND MOVEMENTS:—I am presented to the Emperor Baldwin—I determine to go to the Holy Land—Prince Edward sends for me—England in rebellion—Simon de Montfort, Robert Ferrars, John de Vesci, and Adam Gordon defy the king's power—Llewellyn of Wales ravages Chester—I am sent against Llewellyn—I intercede for Sir Rufus Ribaut—The prince's adieu.....	393
--	-----

## CHAPTER LXV.

FAREWELL TO BOYHOOD:—I take my leave of the king and queen—I encounter the Countess of Salisbury—My reproaches—I bid her adieu—My resolutions—I depart for Chester.....	399
---	-----

## CHAPTER LXVI.

<b>CLOSE OF THE BARONS' WAR:</b> —Henry of Cornwall defeats the Earl of Derby at Chesterfield—Edward is reconciled to John de Vesci—He marches to Alton Wood against Adam Gordon—Engages Gordon in single combat—Gordon is pardoned—Simon de Montfort is reduced—I join the Royalists at Chester—The Welsh are repulsed—Llewellyn attempts a fresh incursion—He is signally defeated—Sues for peace—De Clare's insurrection is quelled—Prince Edward takes the Cross—My reception at Westminster—The queen is still annoyed by the citizens—News from the East—Walter de Merton warns me to look after the demagogues—King Henry dies .....	<b>PAGE</b> 408
---	--------------------

## CHAPTER LXVII.

<b>KING EDWARD COMES:</b> —Loyalty of the capital—Aspect of the City on the day of King Edward's entry—The day of a demagogue gone—The royal cortège—King Edward's salutation—End of the Barons' Wars.....	410
--	-----



## INDEX TO ILLUSTRATIONS.

---

	PAGE
ABBAY RUINS, READING, THE . . . . .	201
ACRE, SIEGE OF, BY THE CRUSADERS . . . . .	403
AMIENS CATHEDRAL . . . . .	225
ANCIENT SMITHFIELD . . . . .	213
ARMED AT ALL POINTS . . . . .	18
BANKS OF THE NILE, THE . . . . .	195
BOAR-HUNTING . . . . .	52
BORDEAUX . . . . .	109
CAPTURE OF DAMIETTA BY THE CRUSADERS . . . . .	193
CHESTER CASTLE . . . . .	399
CONAN DE GAEL'S PROPOSITION TO MARMADUKE TWENGE . . . . .	285
DEMAGOGUES ADDRESSING THE POPULACE . . . . .	138
EVENING . . . . .	277
EVESHAM—THE ABBEY GATEWAY . . . . .	368
GATEWAY TOWER OF MORPETH CASTLE, THE . . . . .	45
GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL . . . . .	232
GUILDFORD CASTLE . . . . .	393
HIGH BARNET CHURCH . . . . .	96
KENILWORTH CASTLE . . . . .	358
KING JOHN'S PALACE, ELTHAM . . . . .	384
LAMBETH PALACE . . . . .	229
LEAPING THE BARS OF THE BARRIERS . . . . .	198
LEWES CASTLE, REMAINS OF . . . . .	271
LOST FIELD, THE . . . . .	302
LUD-GATE . . . . .	141
MAYPOLE, THE . . . . .	60
MERLEY REACHES GAMEL GOODRICK'S HOSTELRY . . . . .	218
MERLEY'S COMBAT WITH SIR HUGH GUBIUM . . . . .	253
MORNING . . . . .	240
MY MOTHER'S DEATH . . . . .	1

	PAGE
OATH, THE . . . . .	315
OLD LONDON BRIDGE . . . . .	410
OLD STRAND, THE, NEAR ST. MARY-LE-STRAND . . . . .	131
OXFORD, FROM CHRIST CHURCH MEADOWS . . . . .	25
PARIS . . . . .	181
PAUL'S CROSS . . . . .	146
PRINCE EDWARD KNIGHTING RALPH MERLEY . . . . .	359
PRINCE EDWARD, MERLEY, AND HUGH BISSET, AT LEWES . . . . .	296
RALPH LEAVING THE CASTLE . . . . .	67
RALPH MERLEY'S INTRODUCTION TO QUEEN ELEANOR . . . . .	166
RALPH'S NIGHT WITH THE WOLVES . . . . .	82
REMAINS OF NEWMINSTER ABBEY . . . . .	8
REMAINS OF NORTHAMPTON CASTLE . . . . .	247
REPULSE OF THE STUDENTS . . . . .	31
RUNNYMEDE . . . . .	103
ST. ALBAN'S ABBEY . . . . .	102
SALISBURY CATHEDRAL . . . . .	205
STRIPLING, THE, AND SIMON DE MONTFORT . . . . .	118
TEMPLE, THE. N.E. SIDE OF THE TEMPLE CHURCH . . . . .	185
TOWER OF LONDON, THE . . . . .	155
TUNBRIDGE CASTLE . . . . .	261
WESTMINSTER ABBEY . . . . .	407
WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL . . . . .	343
WINDSOR CASTLE . . . . .	174
WOLF-CHASING BY MOONLIGHT . . . . .	89
WOLVES . . . . .	77
WORCESTER CATHEDRAL . . . . .	266
WYE, BANKS OF THE . . . . .	333



# HOW I WON MY SPURS;

OR,

## A Boy's Adventures in the Barons' Wars.



My Mother's Death.

I.

### SAVED FROM THE WRECK.

I AM not a native of England. I drew my first breath at Acre, when that city was in its glory, and boasted of churches and

B



palaces, strong castles and a double line of walls, ramparts and lofty towers, terraces and pleasant gardens. I fancy I can even remember being led about, when, attended by splendid trains, the Christian magnates, wearing golden crowns and vestments bedecked with precious stones, walked in public places, under silken screens, to show themselves to the people ; and of being laid to rest at evening, when the setting sun painted the landscape in gorgeous hues, when the breeze sighed among the palms and lofty sycamores, and when the waters of the Mediterranean washed the white walls, and murmured on the Syrian shore.

My father, Walter Merley, was a younger son of that great Anglo-Norman family the chiefs of which built the castle of Morpeth and founded the abbey of Newminster. Becoming involved, while in early manhood, in the troubles which distracted England during the minority of King Henry III., and especially in that insurrection of the Londoners for which Constantine Fitz-Arnulph, a wealthy citizen, was hung at the Nine Elms, my father escaped to the Continent. He was not, however, the kind of man to waste time as a grumbling or plotting exile. At once pious and ambitious, he took the Cross, and embarked for the Holy Land with the Emperor Frederick. Being an ardent admirer of the exploits of the early pilgrim-princes, he cherished some vague hope of acquiring a principality in the East, as Boemund of Tarentum, and Raymond of Toulouse, had acquired Antioch and Tripoli. But he found that the age for such achievements had gone by, and was fain to content himself with aiding in the defence of the kingdom founded by Godfrey and the Baldwins.

But if Fortune did not highly favour my father's aspirations, Fame soon claimed him as her own. In every encounter with the Saracens he was among the foremost champions of the Cross ; in

every conflict his right arm wrought wonders ; and, as years sped on, and his tall figure became known to the unbelieving foe, the bravest of the Sultan's mamelukes recoiled in dismay before a sword wielded with such keen courage and such dexterous prowess.

It would not have been difficult, with his high reputation as a crusader, for my father, at an early period, to have mended his fortunes by matrimony. But he always declared that no woman, unless a princess with a principality, would satisfy his ambition ; and he long remained steeled against female fascinations. Indeed, he seemed entirely devoted to the service of the Holy Sepulchre ; and he had the reputation of being as unlikely to wed as if he had belonged to the Temple of Zion or to the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem ; when suddenly, at the age of fifty, after a brief absence, he arrived at Acre, in a ship from Cyprus, with a bride who had scarcely reached her fifth lustre.

My father preserved a silence almost mysterious as to the birth and parentage of the fair being with whom he had united his fate. Nobody, however, was much inclined to criticise or question, save in a whisper. His pride and temper rendered it a perilous matter to affront him ; and the very bravest of the Templars and Knights of St. John breathed less freely at the thought of entering the lists for a mortal combat with Walter Merley.

It was the year 1244 after the Incarnation that I, Ralph Merley, first saw the light. About the same time, Jerusalem, which the Emperor Frederick had recovered, was sacked by the Karismians, who slaughtered men, women, and children, desecrated the churches, rifled the tombs, burned the bodies of heroes, scattered to the winds the relics of saints and martyrs, and perpetrated enormities the like of which the Holy City had never before witnessed. Mourning over this event, and despairing of the fortunes of the kingdom of

Jerusalem, my father, albeit years had much increased his pious zeal, began to yearn for his native land, and to speak with a sigh of the days of his youth, of the fair fields over which he had been in the habit of flying his hawk, and the oaken forests through whose glades he had hunted the deer.

It was no secret at Acre that King Henry did not easily forgive men who had once excited his antipathy, especially if they had incurred his dislike by disturbing his government. On this point, however, my father entertained no apprehensions. As an Anglo-Norman who had won fame in Palestine, his name was regarded with pride by Englishmen ; and he had been assured by Richard Earl of Cornwall, when that noble prince was in the East, of such a reception on the king's part, as was due to a warrior who had added to the kingdom's renown. Accordingly, after some delay, my father embarked with his household on board a ship known as the Christopher, and, rejoicing in the hope of ere long setting his foot on English shores, sailed from Acre.

It was the year 1248, and Louis, King of France, was on the point of embarking on that expedition which was fruitful of so many misfortunes, when the Christopher struck on a bank on the coast of France. At first little alarm was felt, and the vessel pursued her course. At length, however, the wind rose and swelled into a gale, and the mariners, discovering that the water was coming in, gave way to dismay and consternation.

In the midst of the alarm and confusion my father remained in his cabin. His courage seemed proof against danger by sea as well as by land ; and in the midst of the peril he remained unmoved, like a man accustomed to danger from childhood ; and when the master mariner, in extreme perplexity, came to ask counsel, he found the champion of the Cross serene and resolute.

"Noble sir," said the skipper, "I have sought your presence to bid you commend yourself to God, for we are all likely to perish."

"How long is it to midnight?" asked my father.

"It is well-nigh an hour," said the skipper.

"Labour till then," said the crusader, "and, I trust in God, the tempest will cease."

The skipper returned to the deck, and encouraged his crew in their struggle with the winds and waves, and at midnight my father went to their assistance. It soon appeared as if his prayers had been answered; for, shortly after the midnight hour, the wind fell and the sea became calm. In grateful surprise, the skipper sought the warrior, to express his gratitude and satisfy his curiosity.

"Noble sir," said he, "seeing that the danger is now clearly over, and that your help has been of more avail than the efforts of all the mariners in the ship, may I make bold to ask why you would not come to our aid till midnight?"

"Know," answered my father, "that, at the midnight hour, the monks and other devout people who are of my ancestors' foundations, rise to sing Divine service. Putting confidence in their prayers, I hoped that God Almighty would then assuage the tempest and send us safety; and (blessed be His name!) it has been as I foresaw."

"It is marvellous!" exclaimed the skipper.

"Yes," said the crusader, with pious fervour; "and out of gratitude for our deliverance, I vow, if we reach the shores of England in safety, to present to St. Nicholas a silver ship for myself, my wife, and child, and to make a pilgrimage barefooted to the nearest shrine."

Walter Merley was not to have an opportunity of fulfilling his

vow. It was ordered that my father should not see his native shores. Ere break of day a cry of distress arose, and the Christopher having sprung a leak, opened her sides and went down. All on board were drowned except my mother—who remained, by accident, on one of the ship's timbers—and myself, to whom she clung with the tenacity of a woman eager to save her only child from a watery grave.

I never had but the most vague recollection of our being saved from the wreck. It seems, however, that when relieved from our perilous predicament, we were treated by pious persons with the tenderness due to human beings for the salvation of whose lives Heaven had interfered ; and, having reached the city of Baphe, we were hospitably received into the house of the Count de Joigny, who had all care taken of us for the honour of God.

The appearance and bearing of my mother produced a strong impression on the personages among whom she was so unexpectedly cast ; and many of them, especially the Countess of Joigny, asked, with unveiled curiosity, " Who is she ? " On this point the widow only half-satisfied questioners. While ready enough to be communicative as to her husband, and to expatiate on his exploits as a crusader, she was silent as to her own country and kindred ; and the count, understanding that hints and questions were alike wasted, requested that no further allusion should be made to the subject.

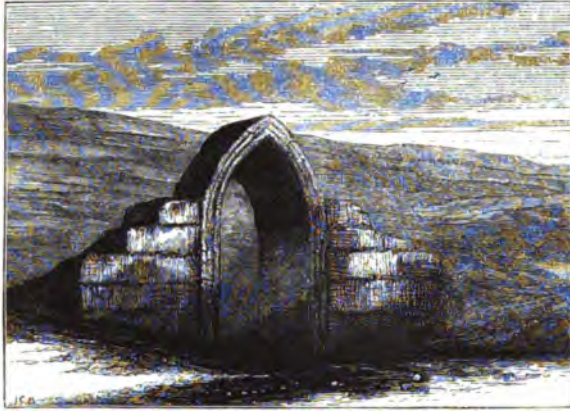
It soon appeared that the bereavement my mother had suffered, and the shock she had experienced, were likely to prove fatal. In fact, she was gradually sinking ; and albeit the countess, whose curiosity was at least as keen as her delicacy, persevered in inquiries, notwithstanding her husband's admonition, the invalid continued dumb as to her antecedents. At length, by the eve of Easter, 1250, the paleness of her cheek indicated that her days

were numbered ; and, in my presence, she intimated to the count her intention, for my sake, of coming to an explanation.

"My lord of Joigny," she said, "I do not conceal from myself that my life is ebbing fast, and that, ere many days, I must go hence to join my husband in those mansions where he, long since, secured a place by his exploits against the enemies of Christ. My husband's brother, if he yet lives, is one of the great barons in the north of England ; but, whether he lives or no, I would have my son sent to dwell among his kindred. Nor is this all. My son inherits, through me, pretensions which may one day place him on a throne of gold. But the story is long ; and, as my strength is exhausted, I will delay till the morrow so to enlighten thee, that with him may be sent to his kinsmen such an account of his claims as they will not overlook."

When morning dawned my mother was no more ! During the night she was suddenly seized with illness, and the count's household was alarmed. She could not speak ; and, after making great exertions to give me a ring, and to impress me with an idea of its importance, the widow of Walter Merley laid herself down ; and, with a sigh for the son whom she left behind, died with the hope of meeting, in another world, the husband whom she had well loved in this.





Remains of Newminster Abbey.

## II.

### THE MERLEYS.

WHEN William the Norman invaded England and won the Battle of Hastings, no part of the conquered country suffered so severely as that important region lying north of the Humber. Exasperated with the repeated insurrections of the Northumbrians, the Conqueror marched north with a vow not to lay aside his lance till he had put them under his feet ; and, in no mood to spare the vanquished, precipitated his fighting men on the unfortunate province. Nothing could exceed the ferocity with which the invaders did their work. Not only were the natives slaughtered by thousands, but towns, and villages, and growing crops were burned, and flocks and herds were destroyed as well as human beings. It was in this district, where marks of the Conqueror's merciless policy were still visible, and

where, albeit two centuries had elapsed, the devastation had neither been forgotten nor forgiven, that I, Ralph Merley, was destined to pass, amid tall Anglo-Danes and dispossessed Anglo-Saxons, some of the earlier years of my existence ; for, in the district so cruelly ravaged, William the Norman, after depriving Cospatrick, heir of the old Saxon earls, of the government, planted several Norman families to restore peace and maintain order ; and conspicuous among these was the family of Merley.

The ancestor of the Merleys was a Norman knight, who came to England with the Conqueror, and fought at Hastings under the standard of the Bishop of Coutance. Planted by William the Norman at Morpeth, and rewarded for his services with broad lands on the Wansbeck, he reared a strong castle near the point of a high diluvial ridge formed by the channels of two small brooks, with sloping ground on every side save the west, which was defended by a ditch. Under protection of this castle a hamlet sprang into existence ; and, under the patronage of the Merleys, the hamlet became a thriving little town, with a church and an hospital.

But still the natives were sullen and indignant, and still they looked with aversion on their Norman lords. At length, however, when the reign of Richard Cœur de Lion was drawing to a close, Ralph de Merley won for himself and his posterity the hearts of the men among whom his lot was cast. Favoured by circumstances, he espoused a daughter of one of the Cospatricks, bearing the name of Juliana, and remarkable for beauty ; and, allied with the descendants of the ancient Saxon earls, the Merleys ceased to be regarded by the Northumbrians as strangers and foreigners. After having, in honour of St. Mary, founded and endowed the Abbey of Newminster, hard by the castle where he maintained feudal



state, Ralph obtained from King John the privilege of holding a yearly fair, granted great privileges to the burgesses, and departed this life, leaving Juliana a widow, with two sons, Roger and Walter, who inherited the valour of their Norman father and the comeliness of their Saxon mother.

At this time, when Ralph de Merley was laid at rest in the chapter-house at Newminster, England was on the eve of that struggle between the king and the barons which resulted in John signing the Great Charter at Runnymede. Young and enthusiastic, his sons entered with ardour into the baronial cause. This cost them dear. Roger having had his castle destroyed by King John, made his peace, after John's death, with young Henry III.; but Walter stuck with eccentric determination to the cause he had espoused, suffered a long exile in consequence, and would in all probability have remained to breathe his last in the East, but for an event of such importance that, unless it had occurred, this chronicle could never have been written—that event being neither more nor less than my birth.

Meanwhile, Roger de Merley, having made his peace with King Henry, passed his life in comparative tranquillity. Having felt the inconvenience of civil war, he became as much a man of peace as such a personage could be at a period when men recognised no law of conduct but their own wills, and only regulated their enterprises by the length of their swords. Nor was it difficult for such a man, even when unlettered, to pass his time. Minstrels and jongleurs ministered to his pleasure, retainers saddled horses and unleashed hounds for his recreation, and chaplains read romances of chivalry for his amusement. In this way the life of my uncle passed over; and when he went the way of all flesh, an only son of his own name succeeded to his feudal castle and his baronial power.

It seems that Roger Merley de Merley, the second of the name, received intelligence that my father was on his way to England, and he was naturally eager for the arrival of a kinsman widely known to fame for his martial achievements. Much grieved was he to hear from the Count de Joigny that his uncle had perished at sea, and much surprised was he to learn that he had left a son. Indeed, I believe he was not wholly unsuspicious of a trick, and the more so that, having three daughters, without being blessed with a son, he was not without apprehension that I, as male heir of the Merleys, might one day endeavour with the strong hand to seize the inheritance.

When, therefore, after some delay, I made my appearance at the castle of the Merleys, my baronial kinsman, feeling somewhat perplexed, invoked the counsel of his grandmother Juliana, now grey and old, but with a heart as proud, and a spirit as high, as in the days of her beauty and her youth. The venerable dowager keenly examined the child who was represented as her grandson, and, after a minute inspection, expressed her thorough satisfaction.

"He has the face of Ralph de Merley and of Walter Merley," she said; "and he must be reared so as to prove himself worthy of being Walter Merley's son."

"But, my lady and grandmother," said the baron, in a deferential tone, "I entreat thee to pause. The birth of this boy is uncertain; it will no longer be thought so if he is recognised as your grandchild. Now, I have no son, but the interests of my daughters are dear to me; and I foresee, that if this child is given the right of calling himself male heir of the Merleys, he may, at any troublesome period, dispossess them, as men in like circumstances have ere this often done."

"Fear not, my grandson," said Dame Juliana; "I will bring

him up as a priest, and he will covet no honours save such as the Church can bestow."

"In that case," said Sir Roger, "do with him as you list."

"Yes," said the dame, "I will so train him, that if ever he rise to be Bishop of Rome, he may not prove unworthy of sitting in the chair of St. Peter."

Young as I was, I began to discover from whom it was that my father had inherited the aspiring vein that prompted him to think of wedding a princess and figuring as a sovereign. My grandmother did not, indeed, think very highly of the Merleys, merely as Anglo-Norman barons. According to her idea, it was she who had given them importance; and so extravagant were the notions of her claims to respect, as having in her veins the blood of the old earls and the Saxon kings of England, that she would have stared in amazement if any one had hinted that she did not enjoy, in point of rank, an unquestionable superiority over the wife of any king or kaiser in Christendom.



## III.

## MY LIFE AT LINDEN.

IT was not by any means wonderful, all things considered, that Dame Juliana Merley took so kindly to the child whom the Count de Joigny had, at the dying mother's request, sent to enjoy the protection of his potent feudal kinsman. In fact, the venerable dowager entertained no doubt whatever that I was her grandson; she believed, moreover, that by some process evidence would ere long turn up to prove the nobility of my maternal ancestry; and she, meanwhile, derived much consolation from the thought that a boy, with a blooming face, blue eyes, fair, curling hair, and remarkably patrician aspect, was one whom, under almost any circumstances, a grandmother might well regard with pride. Roger de Merley, however, either was not, or pretended not to be, by any means perfectly satisfied with his newly-discovered kinsman; and before we left his castle for my grandmother's home he seized an opportunity to express, with the Saxon frankness which he inherited from his maternal ancestors, the sentiments he felt on a subject on which he had reflected without any particular pleasure.

"I crave your pardon, lady and grandmother, and would fain, if I could, take the boy to my heart as you have done," said he, in answer to a somewhat reproachful remark, and in a tone which savoured of envy; "yet I cannot but marvel that you seem to think more of this grandson, of whose existence it is not injustice to say

you were not till lately even aware, than of my three fair daughters, whom you have known from the day they were laid in the cradle."

"He is a noble boy," said my grandmother, avoiding a direct reply, and preparing to depart. "As a warrior, with God's aid, he would have done honour to the blood that runs in his veins ; as a priest, with God's blessing, he will do it no dishonour."

It was to Linden—a house belonging to one of the manors forming the Beanley barony, which had come at her marriage into the family of Merley—that Dame Juliana carried the orphan son of the crusader, henceforth her pride and her hope ; and it was at the manor of Linden, situate in the centre of the great northern county, whence are seen the German Ocean, the Cheviot Hills, and the vale of the Coquet from Rothbury to Warkworth, that I grew up to boyhood under my grandmother's eye.

Although not wholly without strength, my grandmother's house had none of the defences which were deemed necessary to the castle of the Merleys. Her birth and traditions protected her against rich and poor. The awe inspired by the name of a potent earl who was her kinsman, sufficiently secured her against the attacks of the most unruly of feudal warriors ; and the hereditary respect which she enjoyed as a descendant of the ancient earls of the province rendered her word law among the men of native origin.

"She is of the true race," the people used to say—"the best race of the country."

From the day on which I took up my residence under my grandmother's roof, I was her constant companion ; and, becoming every day more attached to her orphan grandchild, she, whilst inspiring me with many of her prejudices, reared me with more than maternal care. Nor, as time passed on, did I feel in any respect ungrateful for the anxiety she manifested in my behalf. In fact I soon began

to discover that the Saxon lady had other qualities than pride and eccentricity, and with an earnest desire to please her, I early assumed a grave and solemn air, as if I already comprehended my position and the career chalked out for me—as if I indulged in dreams of sitting on the throne of Hildebrand, and “pulling down the pride of kings.”

At an early age my grandmother had me carefully initiated in the first elements of letters; and then, eager to have me further instructed, she confided me to a master of grammar, named Robert, who had been a disciple of John of Basingstoke, Archdeacon of Leicester : a man equally well experienced in the threefold and in the fourfold course of study, and completely educated in Greek and Latin literature. Master Robert, however, had acquired little of the erudition of the learned archdeacon at whose feet he had sat, and he was altogether unskilful at reciting verses, or composing them to rule ; and therefore it came to pass that, though I was no unapt scholar, and at first applied myself to my studies with exemplary assiduity, my progress was the reverse of rapid, and quite the reverse of encouraging.

The consequence of this state of things to me was most inconvenient. The master, indeed, showed much interest in his young pupil's welfare, and treated me, in many respects, with so much kindness, that I not only rendered something like passive obedience, but conceived for him a strong attachment. But, as time passed on, a change for the worse took place. Master Robert, enraged beyond measure that his pupil did not learn what he himself was unable to teach, and fancying that severe measures were necessary, daily used the rod without stint ; and I, finding all my efforts to please quite vain, and beginning to despair of escaping punishment do what I might, neglected my studies, and only exercised my ingenuity to

conceal from my grandmother the negligence of which I was guilty, and the punishment to which I was in consequence exposed.

At length affairs reached a crisis. My grandmother, becoming suspicious that all was not right with Master Robert, and that the rod was applied to her grandson with a frequency of which even Solomon, with all his wisdom, would not have approved, began to institute inquiries. One evening, therefore, when I, after having been most severely castigated, went, according to my custom, and seated myself by her knee, she resolved to question me keenly, and, in one way or other, to know the whole truth.

"Child," said my grandmother, taking my hand in hers, "hast thou been beaten this day?"

"Nay, grandam," I answered, starting and colouring; "I have not been beaten. Wherefore do you ask?"

"Because I want to make myself certain on the point," said my grandmother; and, without further ceremony, she pulled aside my garments, with the object of knowing the worst.

The examination, albeit brief, was fatal to Master Robert's character for excessive gentleness, and to my character for strict veracity. It was evident that the rod had not been spared. My arms were black with bruises, and my shoulders were swollen with the blows which had been mercilessly inflicted. My grandmother sprang to her feet, an angry exclamation escaped her lips, the tears started to her eyes, and her frame shook with rage and vexation.

"It is a shame to treat you with such cruelty," cried she, after a pause; "and you of so tender an age."

"I'm afraid," said I, bursting into tears—"I'm afraid, grandam, I've deserved it."

"It must not be thus," continued my grandmother, in a loud voice. "If it be necessary for you, in order to learn letters, and to

become a priest, to endure such treatment, I will not have you either to do one or the other."

"Grandam," said I—in mortal dread at the prospect of a quarrel between Master Robert and the dame, and not wholly without apprehension as to the effect which the revelations of the former as concerned myself might produce on the mind of the latter—"say no more about it. I will not be negligent in future. I can bear all this, and more; for I would rather die than cease learning letters and hoping to be a priest."

In another week I should have answered very differently. Ere that time passed, my ideas had undergone a complete change, and my aspirations were of a very different kind. A wandering knight, who found his way to Linden, quite captivated my boyish fancy with his talk of arms and chivalry; and, with a disinclination to pursue the study of grammar, which all the threats of Master Robert, and all the persuasions of my grandmother, failed to overcome, I indulged, night and day, in dreams and visions of battles and tournaments—of mettled steeds, chain mail, floating banners, and all the pomp and excitement of feudal warfare.







Armed at all points

## IV.

## A KNIGHT-ERRANT.

**I**T was a bright, merry day in summer ; and at Linden all was, as usual, peaceful and still. My grandmother was working tapestry with the eldest of her great-granddaughters, a fair damsel just emerging from her teens ; and I, Ralph Merley, stretched on the battlements, was looking towards the German Ocean, and wondering whether life at the castle of my kinsman was ever so dull as life at our castellated house, when up the ascent that led to Linden rode a knight, attended by a single squire, and loudly sounded a trumpet before the gate.

Guests of any consequence were always rare birds at Linden ;

and, of all others, a knight-errant was the least likely to have appeared. It thus came to pass that his trumpet, though loudly blown, was not immediately answered. Apparently disgusted at what he probably deemed a breach of the usages of hospitality, the knight wheeled round his horse to depart. But I, whose interest was highly excited, rushed down to give the alarm, and, to my great joy, my grandmother's pages, having been sent to make excuses, succeeded in bringing the knight back.

Meanwhile I hastened to my grandmother and my fair kinswoman, who were still busy with their tapestry, and, taking my place close by my grandmother's chair, awaited the entrance of the stranger with lively curiosity.

It was some time before he appeared. At length, however, ushered in by the seneschal, the knight presented himself; and, having caused the squire who followed at his heels to take off his helmet, he bowed his bald head to the ladies with the air of a man who had long worshipped their sex. I afterwards learned that he was little more than forty, but he looked much older; in fact, he seemed to have suffered much care and anxiety. What remained of his hair was grey. One eye was covered with a patch of green cloth, and in his other there was that peculiar restlessness which is regarded as a sign of insanity. However, he was strong and stalwart, evidently long accustomed to arms; and, in fact, one likely to prove a formidable antagonist in battle or tournament.

"Madam," he said, again bowing low, and addressing my grandmother, "I am known as Sir Rufus Ribaut, a knight of whose feats in arms you may, perhaps, have heard from minstrel and pilgrim. In my day I have fought the infidel Saracen and the heretical Greek, and have so exposed my breast for the kingdom of Jerusalem and the empire of Constantinople, that men have deemed my name

worthy to rank with those of Godfrey, and the Baldwins, and King John de Brienne. I am now under a vow, which I made before the ladies and the peacock, not to see with both eyes till I have encountered the doughtiest champion in England, and taken the crown from the head of Henry of Winchester."

My grandmother had hitherto listened with some slight impatience. She now fixed her keen eye on the knight with a look of surprise in which there was also some alarm.

"The man is beside himself," she whispered to her great-grand daughter; "he is a mad knight."

"And so," continued Sir Rufus, without remarking the effect his speech produced, "I have landed in England in search of this champion, and I am seeking him from castle to castle."

"I fear, Sir Knight," said my grandmother, "that small chance is there of finding such a personage under my roof; unless, indeed, you accept as such my grandson, Ralph Merley, here present, who, however, is being trained up as a peaceful scholar."

"Merley!" exclaimed the knight-errant, pausing, and seeming to struggle with some painful reminiscence.

"The name seems to strike you," remarked my grandmother, not without curiosity.

"The name of Merley!" exclaimed the knight. "Yes; and may God desert me when I forget it! A man who was once my most beloved friend, afterwards my most hated enemy, bore the name. Had Walter Merley and I not quarrelled in the Holy Land, we might together have destroyed the Sultan's power. At Constantinople we again met and renewed the quarrel. I would almost give my hopes of salvation to have that man before me, in mortal combat, on foot or on horseback."

"Peace, Sir Knight!" interrupted my grandmother. "Walter

Merley is beyond your enmity and your vengeance. He fills a watery grave."

"Dead! drowned!" cried Sir Rufus. "Walter Merley no more! Well, I war not with the dead. May God have mercy on the soul of one who fought so bravely for the Holy Sepulchre!"

The knight-errant crossed himself devoutly as he spoke, and an awkward silence followed his words. Recovering herself quickly, however, my grandmother put some questions to the strange knight about her son, with a view of gaining information about his marriage. But Sir Rufus was not to be brought back to the subject. It seemed, indeed, that he knew at what point the dame was driving; and I well remember, boy as I was, remarking how cunningly he contrived to evade every question, no matter how skilfully put. At length, finding himself pressed, he broke away from the subject.

"I heed not such matters," he said, suddenly. "Besides, I am in search of the bravest champion in England; and when I find him, let him look well to his harness."

"It is a search in which I cannot aid you," said my grandmother, who, finding that nothing could be made of her strange visitor, became heartily anxious to get rid of him. "I am an aged woman, and my grandson, the son of him whom you have mentioned, is, as you perceive, a boy."

"Walter Merley's son?" said Sir Rufus, looking upon me with an earnest gaze. "He has his father's face—not his scornful expression, though; but in time that will come, unless indeed he has sucked in some meekness of spirit with his mother's milk."

"His mother!" said my grandmother, tempted to make another effort. "What know you of her?"

"Of whom?" asked the knight.

"Of the wife of my son, Walter Merley."

The knight remained silent ; indeed, he appeared buried in thought. At length he seemed to think an answer necessary.

" Asked thou if I know aught of the wife of Walter Merley ?" he said, after a long pause. " Noble dame, I know nothing. In truth," he continued, somewhat wildly, " I do not profess to know anything for certain, save that I have vowed before the ladies and the peacock, to seek out the stoutest champion of whom England can boast."

My grandmother bit her proud lip to conceal her renewed disappointment, and it seemed that the ideas of Sir Rufus were turned in a new direction. Having for some time gazed steadfastly on the daughter of Roger de Merley, he suddenly either was, or pretended to be, captivated by her beauty, and threw himself at her feet with every sign of profound admiration.

" Fairest of demoiselles !" said he, " I swear to you eternal devotion ! Armed, as I am, in mail of the best temper, it has been impotent to guard my heart against the influence of your eyes. Willingly, most willingly, would I die for your sake ; but I will rather live to proclaim your beauty and excellence throughout Christendom. Deign to accept my homage ; and, when I have found and slain my adversary—as slay him I will—I will bring his head on my saddle-bow, and lay it at your feet as a trophy."

While speaking in this strain, Sir Rufus seized the young lady's hand, and kissed it repeatedly with evident enthusiasm. At first the damsel submitted without any very obvious symptoms of impatience. At length, however, she exhibited not only impatience, but some degree of fear.

" Be calm, my child," whispered my grandmother ; " he is merely going through his forms."

" A little longer, noble dame," said the squire, in a whisper, " and he will tire, and take his departure."

The squire was not wrong in his prognostication. After indulging in a moderate repast, and a not very moderate harangue on the glories of love, and war, and feats in arms, which well-nigh turned my head, Sir Rufus ordered his squire to put on his helmet; and having courteously bidden the ladies—especially the younger of the two—"farewell," he placed his hand, not without signs of tenderness, on my head, patted me affectionately, sighed audibly, and then sallying forth with eccentric gestures, mounted his steed, and, with his squire in attendance, rode from Linden.

"Gamel, son of Ulph!" shouted my grandmother, rousing herself to energy as the knight disappeared.

A man, straight as a palm-tree, in the prime of life, and of tall stature, with a sagacious countenance, and a keen grey eye, stood before her.

"Gamel, son of Ulph!" said the dame, "thou and thine have ever been true as steel, and faithful as true, to the race from which I spring."

"Madam," answered the man, with the "burr" which the Northumbrians have inherited from their Danish ancestors, "I am your servant in all things."

"That madman," she continued, "has the secret which of all others I desire to have—the secret, I say!" she continued, stamping her foot, "as to the marriage of my brave son Walter. He has baffled me—baffled me, Juliana, daughter of Cospatrick! but you he cannot. Follow him! get that secret out of him! Tear it out of him!" said the dowager, again stamping with rage, "even if you tear his heart away with it!"

"Madam," said Gamel, "I will do all that is possible."

"Possible!" exclaimed my grandmother. "Bear in mind that the daughter of your old earls likes not to hear the word 'impossible'."

from those who serve her. But away! mount! begone! Bring me back what I want, or never again look me in the face!"

And having, with a wave of her hand, dismissed Gamel, son of Ulph, whom everybody, save herself, called Gamel Goodrick, she sank back into her chair exhausted.

"Grandam," said I, returning, after having, with high admiration, watched Sir Rufus ride away—"who is he?"

"A wandering knight," said she, carelessly.

"I should like to be a knight," said I, earnestly. "I think, now, I will not be a priest, but a soldier, as my father was, and as a Merley ought to be."

"In your case, my child," said the dowager lady, "it cannot well be so."

"But it must, and it shall be so!" cried I, with a determination which, up to that time, she had not observed me exhibit.

From that day, I, Ralph Merley, paid less and less attention to my grammar. Ere long, Master Robert found that his occupation as preceptor was well-nigh gone; and at length my grandmother so far yielded to my entreaties as to undertake the difficult duty of persuading Roger de Merley to have me brought up to the career of arms, and to admit me to his own castle as an apprentice of chivalry. I awaited the result with feverish impatience.





Oxford. from Christ Church Meadows.

V.

THE SCHOOLS OF OXFORD.

**M**Y grandmother did not much approve of my new-born aspirations after a career of arms. Indeed, she had, of late, arrived at the resolution of placing me under the tuition of the monks of the religious house which her departed husband had founded on her land and endowed with her wealth ; and she had been regaling her fancy and delighting her soul with visions of my one day figuring as Abbot of Newminster, and proving as famous a saint as Cuthbert or Dunstan.

Nevertheless, faithful to the promise my importunity had wrung from her, she represented my wishes to the head of our feudal house with all the eloquence she possessed and all the earnestness she could feign. Roger Merley de Merley, however, set his face decidedly



against a project which, according to the venerable dame's representation, was to result in my winning renown in the helmet and mail of a warrior, instead of winning distinction in the hood and frock of a monk ; and I believe he was all the more resolute in his opposition that her explanation was coupled with a request to receive me into his castle, that I might there, by an apprenticeship to arms, be prepared for knighthood.

Having failed in an object which, to me, she did not profess to have much at heart, and having ascertained, by a new attempt, that my aversion to a monastic life was insuperable, my grandmother proposed to compromise matters—or, rather, to postpone any definite decision—by sending me, in the meantime, to the schools of Oxford ; and I readily enough consented to repair, without delay, to that seat of learning. Neither she nor I had any clear notion of the kind of little world into which I was going. She evidently believed I was entering on a course of training which would end in my being as pious and learned as St. Edmund or Sewall de Bovill ; and I was too eager for novelty in any shape to consider that I knew much less of the life upon which I was venturing than the fishes know of the sea in which they swim.

"The University of Oxford," said my grandmother, with Anglo-Saxon pride, "was founded by the immortal Alfred, whose blood we inherit ; and I learn from my lord Abbot that it is as great a school of virtue and learning as the world can boast of, and renowned as the nursery of the chief nobility of England."

"Be it as you will, grandam," I answered ; "I am ready to obey you in all things reasonable."

"But will you not go to Newminster ?" urged my grandmother, as if about to make a last desperate effort.

"No," said I, in a decided tone ; "that might lead to my

becoming a monk, and a monk I will never consent to be. It is the camp, and not the cloister, on which my heart is now set."

"I ever fear me," said my grandmother, "that you, if a warrior, might be deluded into following your father's footsteps; and it vexes me, as a Saxon woman, to think of another of my descendants striking with Norman barons against the crown which the saintly Edward wore, and against the heirs of Ironside and Ethelred, my ancestors."

"Fear not, grandam," replied I, hastily. "I swear never to draw sword against England's kings, to give over the land and its people to the mercy of petty tyrants. By the Holy Cross, I swear it!"

"It is an oath," said my grandmother, "which no grandchild of mine will ever dare to break."

At the time when I, Ralph Merley, with a view of becoming one of the scholars of Oxford, bade adieu to my grandmother, and, not without many tears, left Linden behind, Oxford, if not the first, had, at least, the reputation of being the second, school of the Church in Europe. Associated with the memory of Alfred the Great, the town and University, at an early period of their existence, enjoyed prosperity and peace; but they had since been exposed to many vicissitudes and misfortunes. During the wars of Saxons and Danes their position had been precarious; and towards them, when the Conquest took place, William the Norman—albeit himself a man of learning, and in the habit of saying, in the words of an old Count of Anjou, that "a king without learning is a crowned ass"—showed no inclination to extend his patronage.

Brighter days, however, were in store for Oxford and her schools. When Henry Beauclerc, who had been educated by the monks of Abingdon, and who frequently repeated his father's saying as to

kings without learning, built the palace of Beaumont, he munificently patronized the schools ; while one of his barons, Robert D'Oyley, added to the importance of the place by building, in the adjacent meadows, the abbey of Osenev. Henry the Second, Richard Cœur de Lion, and King John, all exhibited their interest in the schools of Oxford, which, in time, came to count scholars by thousands, who, living in halls, inns, or hostalries, under the government of a principal, but not recognising the jurisdiction of the civil magistrate, and looking with no friendly eye on the townsmen, ere long became refractory, and, in the end, well-nigh ungovernable.

It is probable, however, that the scholars of Oxford—at least those of English birth—would never have proved so unruly as they were at the time when I entered the precincts of the University, but for circumstances for which, to do them justice, the scholars of Oxford could not be held responsible.

In the time of King Henry III., a German of noble birth, who was destined for a bishopric in his native land, repaired to Paris, to study in the University of that city. One day this noble German—doubtless finding his studies somewhat dry—sent his servant to a tavern for wine ; and, owing to some slight dispute, the servant was beaten by the vintner, and his vessel broken to pieces. Tidings of this outrage on their countryman soon travelled to the hall occupied by the German clerks, and, deeming themselves bound to retaliate, they mustered without delay, sallied forth in a body, entered the tavern, beat the vintner within an inch of his life, and, leaving him half dead, returned to their hall.

Meanwhile a report of what was occurring spread abroad, and roused to a high pitch the indignation of the citizens of Paris. Assembling in great force, they vowed vengeance ; and the provost, placing himself at the head of the commonalty, proceeded to the

hall of the Germans, broke open gates and doors, routed the clerks, and killed the noble whose thirst had caused so much commotion.

This unhappy event led to quarrels between the clerks and the citizens, which caused many scholars to leave Paris ; and King Henry, wishing to raise the fame of Oxford, eagerly invited them to come to England. The invitation was not thrown away. Soon as many as a thousand presented themselves at Oxford, and increased accommodation was necessary. The townsmen, at the king's request, applied themselves to providing it ; and, by making every depopulated cottage inhabitable, and by other methods, they contrived to lodge the strangers who flocked to the University.

The scholars of Paris had ever been an ungovernable body ; and such of them as found their way to England soon infused a refractory spirit into the clerks of Oxford. But this was not the worst. About the same time a band of varlets, who pretended to be scholars, seized so favourable an opportunity of shuffling themselves into the University. Sometimes at ordinary lectures they thrust themselves into the schools, and acquired in this way the privilege of defying the townsmen. But they had no tutors ; they lived under no discipline ; and they brought great scandal on the University by their brawling, their thieving, and the audacity with which they set the laws of the University and God's commandments at defiance.

Of this disreputable band the most conspicuous was a youth who called himself Stephen Fitz-Scrob. It was in vain that the chancellor used all his efforts to extirpate the varlets, and that the king commanded every clerk or scholar, not under the discipline of a tutor, or some master of the schools, to depart. In spite of chancellor and king, Stephen Fitz-Scrob—ever closely attended by a Scot named Oscar—maintained his ground, and gathered around him a

band of miscreants whose presence kept the townsmen in terror about their wares and their women.

It soon began to appear that the influx of foreigners and the intrusion of desperadoes had not exercised the most beneficial influence. In fact, the scholars of Oxford gradually acquired an unenviable reputation. Riots became of frequent occurrence. One day the scholars fought among themselves; another day they quarrelled with the townsmen; on a third the English of the north would encounter the English of the south; and on a fourth the Scots and Welsh would come to blows; and in such conflicts banners were displayed, and sometimes many lives sacrificed. But no matter what the origin of the fray, and no matter to what nation those engaged in it happened to belong, Stephen Fitz-Scrob, attended by Oscar the Scot and his valiant band were sure to be there, with ragged gowns, heavy staves, and keen eyes to the chance of booty.

It was while such was the state of affairs at Oxford that I travelled from Linden and became a scholar of the University, where there resided several youths of noble birth and high name from the north of England, among whom were Matthew Beke and Marmaduke Twenge, sons of northern barons.

Having been placed under the care of Master Robert de St. Agatha and taken about to behold with wondering eyes the marvels of the place—the halls and chapels, with pictures of saints, apostles, and prophets painted on the walls and windows and carved from wood and stone, I donned cap, and hood, and gown, and applied myself with exemplary diligence, not to the studies of the place, but to observing what other scholars did, and walking, as closely as my tender age would permit, in their footsteps. It was not long ere my success in this respect involved me in troubles, and closed my career as “a young clerk” in a perplexing catastrophe.



Repulse of the Students

## VI.

## THE SCHOLARS AND THE LEGATE.

**A**BOUT the time when I left the house of my grandmother, and had the gratification of taking my place among the scholars of Oxford, Otto, Cardinal-Deacon of St. Nicholas in the Tullian prison,

came to England as papal legate ; and having passed the winter in London, he, in the spring, commenced a journey to the north of England.

Professing a strong interest in the University of Oxford, and an earnest desire to visit the schools of which it was formed, the legate halted on his way. His reception was such as ought to have gratified him. Indeed, he was welcomed with quite as much honour as he deserved, lodged in the Abbey of Oseney, and entertained with hospitality in the house of the canons.

At first the scholars of Oxford treated the legate with due deference. Having cheered him on his arrival, they sent meat and drink for his breakfast, and at the same time intimated their intention of going in a body to Oseney to pay their respects.

It was the 23rd of April—St. George's Day—and, having assembled from their various halls, English, Scotch, Welsh, Irish, French, Germans, Spaniards, and Italians, marched in solemn procession. On reaching the door of the Guest Hall, however, they met with a reception which they had not anticipated.

"What want you?" asked the porter, who was an Italian, and one of the legate's attendants. "What is your business? What would you have? Why come you hither?"

"We come," was the answer, "that we may approach the lord legate, and offer our devoirs."

"You cannot," said the porter, adding some insulting remarks in a tone still more offensive than before.

"Roman," cried John Fitz-John, the heir of a great noble, "learn to speak with more courtesy when you address the sons of Anglo-Norman barons."

"Yes, Roman, or it will prove the worse for thee," shouted Stephen Fitz-Scrob, who, having pushed to the foremost rank, rejoiced in

the possibility of a riot. "If you don't know good manners, we know how to teach you."

"Never!" said Marmaduke Twenge—"never, since King Alfred founded the schools of Oxford, have the scholars been treated with such indignity!"

"Come, porter," said Stephen Fitz-Scrob, with a provoking leer, and in an insolent tone, "let us have a look at this miracle of holiness."

"No!" growled the Italian, holding the door a little open, but remaining obstinate.

"We will not brook this treatment—we will appeal to the Pope," cried Odo, a lawyer.

"As well appeal to the devil," muttered a German. "It was the Pope who hunted the Emperor Frederick to death, and poisoned Conrad, his brave son."

"Appeal to Henry the King," cried Marmaduke Twenge.

"The king is Rome's vassal," said John Fitz-John, with a sneer; "and he consents to England being used as the Pope's packhorse."

"To Richard of Cornwall," said Marmaduke Twenge.

"He is off to Germany, in search of an imperial crown," observed John Fitz-John.

"Which he will never get," exclaimed the German.

"To Prince Edward, England's gallant heir," said Marmaduke.

"He has gone to Castile, to wed the sister of Alphonso the Wise," said John Fitz-John. "Appeal to Simon de Montfort, if to any one."

"To Simon de Montfort!" cried Stephen Fitz-Scrob, flourishing his staff; "he is the man to turn England upside down; and it's only when a country is upside down that honest men can get their own."



"Hustle me not!" screamed a Welshman to a tall Scottish youth whose name was Aymer de Maxwell, and whose fair hair, aquiline features, and haughty air unmistakeably indicated his high Norman descent.

"Welshman!" said the Scot, haughtily, "speak with more respect when you speak to your betters."

"Better!" shouted the Welshman, his blood on fire. "Who gave you leave to call yourself the better of one who derives its descent from Brutus, the grandson of Æneas, and from Cadwallader, the son of Cadwallon? Why stay you not at home among the fleas with which your countrymen are so familiar?"

"Dog of a Celt!" exclaimed Aymer de Maxwell, flushing with rage. "Darest thou to insult a Norman gentleman, whose father is chamberlain of Scotland, and who is a countryman of Michael Scott?"

"I care little about Norman or Celt," said Oscar, the Scot; "but being the countryman of the learned Michael is another matter; and I will stand by a man from the north of the Tweed against any Welshman who ever drank mead; not saving Llewellyn himself."

"Let us fall on!" shouted Stephen Fitz-Scrob, who, eager for conflict, was rallying his band of desperadoes around him.

"I lift no finger in the quarrel," said John Fitz-John, moving aside to make way for the combatants.

"Alexander, King of Scots," observed Marmaduke Twenge, "is husband of King Henry's daughter; and to me that seems reason sufficient for not standing by to see the son of his chamberlain insulted by a Welshman."

"For my part," exclaimed Richard Croft, a stripling from the Marches of Wales, "I should deem myself false to the king and to Roger Mortimer, Lord of Wigmore, were I to lose one opportunity of hammering Llewellyn's mock Trojans."

With these words, Twenge and Croft quietly prepared to take part in the anticipated encounter, and weapons began to appear in variety. Indeed, it seemed that the ceremony of the day was to end in a conflict between the Scots and the Welsh ; and the scholars belonging to each of the two nations were hurrying forward to fight for the honour of their countries, when a shout arose, which at the moment terminated the dispute, and drew the whole body in another direction.

It happened that while the scholars at the door of the Guest Hall were wrangling with the doorkeeper and disputing with each other, a poor Irish chaplain, who had lately found his way to Oxford, without being in possession of the means to support himself, had wandered to the door of the kitchen, and, feeling intolerably hungry, begged earnestly and in God's name for some meat. Hearing him, the master of the cooks, who was the legate's brother, and who held the office to preclude the possibility of poison being put into Cardinal Otto's food, at first paid no attention to his request ; but, at length, he came to the door.

" Begone !" said the Italian, in an angry tone.

" In God's name," urged the Irishman, whom the fumes arising from the legate's savoury viands well-nigh maddened, " give me something."

" Take that, if you will have it," replied the master of the cooks, as he ladled some boiling water from a cauldron, and threw it deliberately in the Irishman's face.

But the master of the cooks soon had reason to repent his cruel action. No sooner did the Irish chaplain's cry reach the scholars than to the door of the kitchen, like eagles to the carnage, hastened the whole body of them, boiling with anger and bent on revenge. Well do I remember how my heart swelled with indignation ; how,

small as then was my stature, and slight my proportions, I pushed forward in the thickest of the crowd; and how, as the piercing shrieks of the Irishman were heard, I added my young voice to the general shout of "Down with the Romans!"

It has ever been my wont, whether in scenes of war or peace, to press forward to the point where the interest is highest and the excitement keenest; and when the crowd of scholars, surging, swaying, menacing, occupied the space before the door of the kitchen at Oseney, I contrived to push my slight body to the very spot where the Irish chaplain stood, covering his face with his gown, and weeping in bitter agony. When, therefore, the scholars began satirically to call the master of the cooks "Nabuzardan," and when he, confident, at least, that respect for the legate would save him from bodily injury, brandished the ladle, and dipping it in water, made defiant gestures, as if he intended to do to others as he had done to the Irishman, I suddenly felt some drops on my cheek, and a pain as if my face had come in contact with boiling lead.

"The Roman has burned my cheek!" I cried; and, uttering a shriek, I rushed forward, and, ere the master cook was aware of my intention, sprang fiercely at his throat. I was instantly thrown back with great violence; and, in some circumstances, the scholars would have indulged in merriment at my expense; but at present they were in no mood for mirth; and my mishap only added to the indignation which they already felt.

"Fie upon you, Nabuzardan," cried John Fitz-John, "to throw boiling water on a famishing man, and one of a sacred calling!"

"And," added Marmaduke Twenge, "to harm an orphan boy of noble blood and name!"

"It ought not to be suffered," said Odo the lawyer.

"Shame upon us, if we do suffer it!" exclaimed Richard Croft.

"Down with Nabuzardan !" shouted all.

"Here goes, then," said the Marchman ; and, suiting the action to the word, he drew his bow, and sent an arrow through the Italian's heart.

The master of the cooks dropped lifeless to the ground, and his subordinates uttered loud exclamations of horror. The scholars, however, were not in the least daunted by this circumstance. Their blood was up, and instead of regretting what had happened, they were all eagerness to deal with the legate. A leader only was wanting, and Odo the lawyer no sooner offered himself than he was accepted.

"Come, my lads," cried Odo, "follow me, and let us complete our work."

"Yes," roared the scholars, "let us complete our work ;" and, entering the building with a rush, they sought every corner and hiding-hole for the legate.

Suffering fearfully from the effects of my mishap, and infuriated by pain, I did not allow my tender age to prevent me from taking a prominent part in the search. I eagerly caught up the cries that resounded about the abbey, and which, as darkness fell over the banks of the Isis and the Cherwell, were re-echoed from the town by Stephen Fitz-Scrob and Oscar the Scot, and their valiant band, who, having deemed it politic to change the scene of their exertions, and pretending to believe that the legate was concealed in the town, insisted on entering house after house, and terrified Jew after Jew, and burgher after burgher, by the audacity of their bearing and the vehemence of their gestures.

Never since has Oxford seen such a sight. Even hours after it was dark the excitement continued, and the search was pursued. All fears and scruples had been thrown to the wind ; and, exaspe-

rated by disappointment, the scholars shouted in a tone which sufficiently proved the extent of their rage.

"Where," cried some, "is that simoniacal usurer—that plunderer of revenues—that thirster after money?"

"Yea," added others, "where is that Roman who perverts the king, subverts the kingdom, and enriches his foreigners with the spoil taken from us?"

But the legate was not to be found. Every place likely to have concealed him had been searched in vain; and I confess that I, for one, felt bitterly mortified as, fatigued and jaded, we gathered in a circle around Odo the lawyer.

"It seems," said Odo, half gaily, half despondingly, "that the bird with the scarlet plumage has flown."

"He has escaped the net of the fowlers," chimed in Stephen Fitz-Scrob, who, with Oscar the Scot, had returned from the town; not, however, before giving Jew and burgher some right to complain that they had turned the commotion to profitable account.

I do not think I slept at all that night. I watched eagerly for the break of day, in the expectation that the search would be resumed. But the morning brought repentance to most of those engaged in the fray; and I remarked with surprise that care and anxiety sat on the faces which, on the previous day, had been lighted up with excitement. I ere long began to discover, and to experience to my cost, what my seniors already knew, that hunting a cardinal-legate was a recreation in which not even a clerk of Oxford could indulge with impunity.

## VII.

## THE LEGATE'S ESCAPE, AND MY OWN.

IT soon appeared that, though the cardinal-legate was too old a bird to allow the Oxford scholars to put salt on his tail, he had on St. George's Day been much nearer his pursuers than was quite pleasant.

When the master of the cooks fell mortally wounded with the arrow shot by the Marchman, the legate heard the cry that was raised ; and, penetrated with sudden fear, he rushed from the Guest Hall, and putting on his canonical hood, climbed to the tower of the church, and bolted and barred the doors behind him. He heard the voice of his pursuers in search of him ; he saw them as they dispersed in other directions, and as they returned to vent their disappointment ; and he naturally suffered intense anxiety as he lay, quaking and trembling, till the shades of evening fell.

No sooner, however, did the sun set than he resolved to escape ; and, having descended from the church tower, he doffed his canonical robes, mounted his best horse, and hastened to place himself under the king's protection. Most of his people were concealed ; but with a few followers he, at great hazard, crossed the river at the nearest point ; and with the shouts of his pursuers still ringing in his ears, and with fear urging him on, he ere long came into the king's presence.

While Otto told his tale, not making the peril he had undergone

one degree less than it had really been, Henry listened with amazement. After having expressed his sympathy with the legate, and his indignation against the scholars, the king declared that the offenders must be brought to justice.

"By God's head!" he exclaimed, "such conduct must not go unpunished! Where is John de Warren?"

"Here, sire," said the young earl, stepping forward.

"John de Warren," said the king, "take armed men, mount forthwith, ride to Oxford, rescue my lord legate's men who are left there, and arrest the scholars who have been guilty of this outrage."

John, Earl Warren—then a young and rather handsome Anglo-Norman, whose chief seat was the castle of Lewes, and whose countess, Etesia, was a niece of King Henry—hastened to obey the royal mandate, and soon made his appearance at Oxford, much to the alarm of those who had taken a prominent part in the riot. He first rescued the legate's attendants, who lay concealed; and then, having roughly seized Odo the lawyer and thirty of the clerks, he conveyed them to the castle of Wallingford.

It was notorious that almost all the scholars had taken part in the proceedings, and the king perceived the absurdity of making thirty suffer for the whole. On the 29th of April, therefore, he appeared at Oxford, suspended the University, and forbade all service, exercise, and ordinary lectures.

About the same time the legate, having regained his courage, summoned several bishops to Abingdon, solemnly interdicted the University, and excommunicated all who had taken part in the outrage. This sentence was published with bell, book, and candle; and many of the scholars who felt they were in danger fled from Oxford.

I, Ralph Merley, felt that I was under suspicion. Moreover, I

became aware that, young as I was, I was specially marked out for punishment, owing to my having been the first to lay hands on the master of the cooks. My mind revolted from the notion of having to undergo any humiliation for showing my anger against a man who had burned my cheek ; and, as my pride rose, I determined rather to be drawn by wild horses than to submit voluntarily.

Nevertheless I cared not to fly. I was so reluctant to show the white feather, that I tried to brave the danger as long at least as I could. This proved most unfortunate, for the king hearing that many of the scholars were leaving, issued his brief, prohibiting every one from departing without the royal licence.

I now felt that my predicament was the reverse of pleasant, and that some decisive step must be taken. In these circumstances I resolved to be gone without any licence, let the consequences be what they might ; and having made up my mind, I laid aside my academical dress, and escaping from the place one evening after sunset, I turned my face northward.

I need not describe my long and tedious journey. In truth, looking back at this date, and remembering what was then the state of the country, I marvel that I ever attempted it. But it is sufficient to say, that after having been frequently reduced to despair, and having been a prisoner some days in the hands of men of the forest, who, on learning whose grandson I was, and assuring themselves that I was a law-breaker like themselves, sent me on my way, I did one day in June contrive to reach Linden, and throw myself into the arms of my grandmother.

I do not think that Dame Juliana could have been more astonished if her departed lord had risen from his resting-place in the chapter-house at Newminster, and presented himself to her in his shroud. At first she scarcely recognised me, so great had been the



effect of the journey ; and when she did, I believe that her superstition got the better of her strong intelligence, and that she deemed me a being from another world. At length, however, she became convinced that I was her grandson, and in the flesh ; and I told my tale, not, I confess, without anticipating that her wrath would be kindled against me.

But in my calculation I had not taken into account my burned cheek. I soon found, however, that the mere sight of it exercised a mighty influence in my favour. In truth, so utterly indignant was she, that I believe that if the Marchman had not killed the legate's master of the cooks, she would have moved heaven and earth to have had him hanged for injury done to an orphan boy, with her blood and the blood of her progenitors in his veins. I was told to content myself and to remain at ease.

"But, grandam," said I, "I have left without the royal licence."

"Say no more about it," said my grandmother, fiercely ; "I will not have you punished to please any prince or king—no, not if Alfred or Edward rose from the dead to demand it. Surely I can do as I list with my own grandson ! Besides, Henry is proud of his Saxon descent ; blood is thicker than water ; and he will not press hard on a youth in whose veins runs the blood of Ethelred."

"But the legate and the Pope, grandam ?" I said.

"Fear them not," she replied, in a conclusive tone ; "on such a point I will yield neither to legate nor Pope."

Roger Merley de Merley did not take quite so favourable a view of my conduct in the affair of the legate as my grandmother had done. Indeed, my baronial kinsman evinced little sympathy with me in my distress, and showed much aversion to be mixed up with the business. I cannot suppose that he rejoiced at my mishap, but he evidently had a strong disinclination to help me out of the trouble.

My grandmother did not apply to him twice. It was not her wont to do so in any case, and least of all when I was concerned. But when she became aware of the full extent of my indiscretion, and the penalty to which I had exposed myself, she saw the necessity of obtaining the king's pardon, and roused all her energies to meet the crisis.

I confess I felt the reverse of comfortable, notwithstanding many vague assurances that no harm should befall me; and I began to quake when news came northward that the other scholars had, in a body, made their peace with the legate and obtained the king's pardon by walking penitentially barefoot, and without their hoods and gown, from the church of St. Paul to Durham House in the Strand.

"God forfend that grandson of mine should walk in any such guise because an Italian cook has fallen in a fray!" said my grandmother. "But fear not," she added; "for so long as I live, and Cospatrick's war-steeds are what they are, neither king nor kaiser shall harm one hair of your head!"

"What mean you by Cospatrick's war-steeds, grandam?" asked I.

"My child," said my grandmother, after a pause, "askest thou what I mean by Cospatrick's war-steeds? Know that our mighty kinsman, besides his impregnable castle, has a chain of twelve strong castles to guard his dominions, and that these, from the vigilance with which they are manned and kept in repair, go familiarly by the name of Cospatrick's war-steeds."

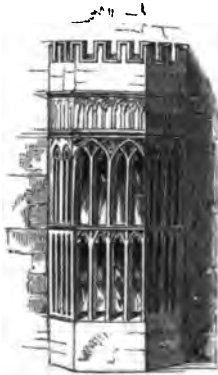
It appears that my grandmother was not reckoning without her host. A monk of Newminster, known as Brother Thomas, and celebrated for his persuasive powers, was now summoned to Linden, and intrusted with the important duty of crossing the Tweed, and securing, on my behalf, the interference of my potent kinsman.

Brother Thomas, mounting his mule, rode off on his mission ; and the result proved that my grandmother had not exaggerated either her influence with her kinsman, nor his influence with the king. I was ere long relieved from all anxiety, but with my pardon was coupled the condition that Roger Merley de Merley should become surety for my obeying the laws and keeping the peace.

"Young kinsman," said Roger Merley de Merley, drily, "if I am to answer for your good behaviour, it is meet that you should live under my eye ; wherefore I pray you to remove without delay to my castle, and place yourself under the orders of Sir John de Plessy."

I now prepared to leave Linden, and again took leave of my grandmother. In spite of the unhappy opening of my career, and the anxiety I had cost her, she was affectionate as of yore, and still confident that my destiny was high.

"My child," she said, as I was about to take my departure, "fear God, and He will aid you. Be courteous to all men, servile to none. Be true to the end in word and deed, and men will hold your name in honour. Be frank and brave to the rich and powerful, kind and helpful to the poor and afflicted, and Heaven will so aid and bless you, that you will be loved in hall and dreaded in battle."





The Gateway Tower of Morpeth Castle

## VIII.

### MY KINSMAN'S CASTLE.

**I** MIGHT have had the fortune to enter a castle where the household and the housekeeping were more magnificent than that of my ancestors; but I could hardly have entered a household where the life was more decorous, or the discipline better. Everything was done decently and in order; and Roger Merley de Merley could hardly have practised greater regularity if he had exactly followed the rules prescribed in the homely rhyme—

“To rise at five; to dine at nine;  
To sup at five; to bed at nine;  
Makes a man live to ninety-nine.”

It was the hour of dinner when I reached the castle, and I was forthwith conducted to the great hall, where a huge oaken table

groaned beneath massive sirloins. I did not, under the circumstances, expect from Roger Merley de Merley a cordial welcome; but from a kinsman so near I expected at least a friendly reception. In this, however, I was doomed to disappointment—in fact, he showed me very cold countenance.

“Young kinsman,” said he, drily, “you will place yourself under the instructions of Sir John de Plessy.”

I bowed, and, retiring in silence, seated myself at my appointed place; and the lord of the castle, attended by his chief jester, having taken his seat on the dais, the friends, and holders of fee, and retainers ranged themselves above or below the salt according to their respective ranks; the hounds lay on the rushes that covered the floor, and the hawks stood around on perches. The sirloins were succeeded by fowl and fish, and dishes curiously compounded. The dinner lasted three hours, the minstrels and jesters filling up the intervals.

Seated at my kinsman's board, I was brooding, in a melancholy mood, over the evil fortune that had placed me under the roof of a man who evidently did not, in the least, desire my presence, and half-regretting that I had not avoided my adventure at Oxford and the awkwardness in which it had involved me by becoming an inmate of Newminster, when an old knight addressed me and roused me from my melancholy reflection. It was Sir John de Plessy, who held the manor of Shotton from Roger Merley de Merley, and superintended the martial exercises of the youths who sought instruction in the castle of Morpeth.

“It is a noble service upon which you are entering,” said the knight.

“So the world accounts it,” said I, in no celestial humour, for my kinsman's reception had galled me sorely.

"It would be a marvel," he remarked, "if the son of Walter Merley thought otherwise."

"I am to be under your instructions, Sir Knight," said I.

"And that, young gentleman," said the old knight, smiling, "is a circumstance which I would fain hope you will not have cause to repent. Doubtless you may, at first, find your duties irksome. But they are not, on that account, the less necessary; for what say the learned in such matters? 'It is fitting,' say they, 'that the son of a knight, while he is a squire, should know how to take care of a horse; and it is fitting that he should serve before and be subject to his lord; for, otherwise, he would not know the nobleness of his lordship when he shall be a knight; and, to this end, every knight should put his son in the service of another knight, to the end that he may learn to carve at table, and to serve, and to arm, and apparel a knight, in his youth.' Wherefore, Master Merley," added Sir John, "I give you welcome to this castle, and trust that your progress in chivalry and skill in arms will be such as to convince the noble matron your grandmother that I, John de Plessy, have done my duty towards her son's son."

Having delivered himself of this address, which he intended to mark his strong friendship, the old knight shook my hand and left me; and I, somewhat cheered, prepared to make the best of my position, and, in truth, succeeded so well, that, ere many days passed, I felt myself at home and mingling familiarly with the youths who, as pages and squires, were, under my kinsman's patronage, qualifying for knighthood.

It is now many years since I entered the castle of Morpeth; and so great are the changes which have meanwhile occurred, and which I have taken part in bringing about, that men, born since the day when the good King Edward began to reign, and confounding the

traditions as to divers periods, are apt to imagine that, previous to that auspicious day, the condition of England was less tolerable than in reality people found it.

Not the less true is it, however, that when I, Ralph Merley, commenced my apprenticeship to chivalry, feudal life in England no longer presented the gloomy aspect which it had presented before the Plantagenets began to reign. Assuredly it would be vain and foolish to deny that, before the time when Henry II. was crowned at Winchester—which, up to that period, was the proper constitutional capital of the kingdom—the castles of the Anglo-Norman barons were, in many cases, abodes of tyranny and crime. Perhaps the Anglo-Saxon chronicler is, on this point, guilty of little exaggeration when he describes the excesses of which the feudal lords were guilty.

"They," says the chronicler, "grievously oppressed the poor people by building castles; and, when they were built, they filled them with wicked men, or rather devils, who seized both men and women, who, they imagined, had any money, threw them into prison, and put them to more cruel tortures than the martyrs ever endured."

But by the middle of the thirteenth century a considerable change had been wrought in the condition of England. The position of race towards race and class towards class had much changed for the better; and such barons as John Gifford, Lord of Brimsfield; John de Vesci, Lord of Alnwick; Robert de Roos, Lord of Hamlake; Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk; Humphrey Bohun, Earl of Hereford; Robert Ferrars, Earl of Derby; Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford; and Richard de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, were looked upon by the nation with very different eyes from the men whose castles Henry II. razed to the ground, and whose names the people cursed to their faces.

It is held by the wise that the Crusades, while fruitful of

calamities to the individuals who took part in them, have exercised a most beneficial influence, not only on the commerce, but on the mind, the manners, and the social life of Europe. Before Peter the Hermit roused the nations of the West to arm for the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre, warriors strove merely for territory and wealth. The Crusades elevated their mind, and, by teaching them to fight and suffer for something ideal, gave their whole nature a loftier aim.

Greatly have the nobles of England benefited by this revolution. Many of the old feudal houses have, indeed, sunk in ruin; but such as survive have highly profited. Manners have been softened, and religious enthusiasm has given birth to a kind of chivalry, which teaches us not only to serve God, and to treat women with respectful homage, but to aid the weak and to succour the oppressed.

Moreover, minstrelsy and heraldry have arisen to refine and to instruct. Minstrels put the noble actions of the Crusaders into verse; and heralds, by interpreting the coats of arms and emblems assumed by the champions of the Cross, keep alive the memory of historic deeds, and the claims of families to popular respect.

When I entered my kinsman's castle, it was replete with all the means and appliances which render feudal life easy and pleasant; and I, catching the spirit of the place, began to learn to ride, to sing, to carve, to dance, and was initiated into the mysteries of hunting and hawking. But it was in those exercises which prepare men for tournament and battle fields that I chiefly took delight. I entered upon this with the same kind of enthusiasm with which I had formerly begun the study of grammar; but having now, in the person of Sir John de Plessy, a preceptor who understood what he professed to teach, my progress was infinitely more encouraging.

At the castle of the Merleys—as, indeed, in every feudal castle, which is a school for boys of gentle blood learning the graces of knighthood



and the virtues of chivalry—a broad space, known as the tilt-yard, is set apart, and covered with sand and sawdust, for the exercises of youths living under the patronage of the lord. On this space the pupils in arms are made to attack two mock adversaries. One of these is known as the pel, the other as the quintain.

The first of these, the pel, is simply the stump of a tree, about six feet in height. This the boy, armed at all points, is made to attack vigorously ; and while he strikes or thrusts at different parts which represent the head, breast, shoulders, and legs of an antagonist, he is taught to cover himself with his shield, and is thus instructed in the art of defence.

The quintain is a somewhat more formidable adversary. It is a wooden figure, representing a Saracen, armed in mail, holding a shield in one hand, and brandishing a wooden sabre in the other. As the youth attacks the pel on foot, so he attacks the quintain on horse-back. But the blows of the quintain, unlike those of the pel, are not imaginary. The figure moves on a pivot, in such a way that, unless the assailant is sufficiently dexterous to strike the Saracen on the face or breast, it rapidly revolves, and deals him a heavy blow on the back in his career.

I diligently devoted myself to the various exercises of the tilt-yard, trusting that I might, by excelling, convince my kinsman that I was worthy of more consideration than he seemed to think I deserved ; and, whether we were tilting at each other with blunt lances, or riding at the ring, or following each other in a circle, and vaulting from our steeds and mounting while they galloped, or imitating the famous charge of Richard Cœur de Lion at Joppa, with a sword in the right hand and a lance in the left, I did great credit to Sir John de Plessy's training. In fact, I, under the old knight's auspices, rapidly became proficient in the use of arms. I had grown

into a tall, and, as I believed, a handsome stripling ; when, in 1262, two events important to my fortunes occurred. In the spring of that year I finished the first stage of my novitiate, and attained to the rank of squire ; and in the autumn my grandmother died, and was laid by the side of her husband in the chapter-house at Westminster.

From my first entering his household my kinsman had treated me with cold hauteur, and, after the death of my grandmother, his manner became still more intolerable than it had before been. It was not dislike that animated him, but a jealous suspicion with which he had been inspired by one of his knights, named Hugh de Gubium, who hated me with a perfect hatred ; and I verily believe that Roger Merley de Merley lived under the constant apprehension of my availing myself of some civil commotion to possess myself of the inheritance of his daughters, and that he died terrifying himself with the hateful vision of Ralph Merley sitting, with triumphant air, in the halls of his ancestors, and lording it over their broad baronies and numerous retainers.





Bear Hunting

## IX.

## AN ADVENTURE IN THE CHASE.

IT was a privilege which the Merleys enjoyed of hunting in the king's forests ; and of that privilege Roger Merley de Merley frequently availed himself. I was sometimes in attendance on my baronial kinsman on such occasions—marvellously often, indeed, considering how little he relished my company ; though, whether he took me to the forest on account of my superior woodcraft, or on the chance of my being gored by a stag or wild bull, or torn to pieces by a wolf or wild boar, I have never been able to discover. But I am willing to believe his motive to have been worthy enough. For my own part, I rather rejoiced at being summoned to attend ; I had taken to

field sports with enthusiasm, and I liked well to display my equestrian skill, for which even envy itself could not deny me credit.

One day, however, in the spring of 1263, after a hunting mass in the castle chapel, Roger Merley de Merley rode forth with horn and hound, and a train, of which I formed one. I was, at such times, rather in the habit of avoiding my kinsman ; and that day I was particularly inclined to do so, because the sport was bad, and his temper worse than the sport.

My own frame of mind was by no means of the happiest. I had lately been cherishing that kind of ambition which, by prompting a man to set his heart on objects too high for him to reach, often results in a life of dreams or a life of disappointment. My mother's remark—"My son may yet sit on a golden throne," and my grandmother's prediction—"My grandson will yet raise his head higher than any Merley ever did before"—had sunk deep into my young heart ; and, encouraging delusions similar to those which, in youth, misled my sire, I began to think of conquering kingdoms and founding dynasties, trampling down oppressors, and setting the world right. I was, in imagination, acting some mighty part in human affairs, when Roger Merley de Merley beckoned me to approach.

"It seems, kinsman," said he, turning in his saddle as I rode alongside, "that affairs in England are hastening to a crisis, and that the king is now at Roxburgh, or Wark, holding a conference with his son-in-law of Scotland, doubtless to ask aid."

"As well that the crisis come soon as syne," I replied, not without bitterness.

"Every reconciliation between the king and the twenty-four barons," he continued, "proves hollow ; and the time is at hand when men will have to choose on which side to draw their swords."

"My choice, then, is made," said I, hastily ; "I will draw mine

for the king. I have read that liberty sometimes flourishes under a good king ; but I have never read, nor can I imagine any man in his senses writing, that liberty could flourish under four-and-twenty bad barons."

"Perilous talk, as matters stand," observed Roger Merley de Merley, somewhat surprised at my decision of tone.

"It may be," I said ; "but I am one of those who hold that an Englishman's words should be as free as his thoughts. For the rest, I swore to my grandmother, by the Holy Cross, never to fight against the crown which holy Edward wore ; and, tide what may, it is an oath that I intend to keep."

"Would that I could see my way," muttered my baronial kinsman ; "for difficult are the times, and dangerous is it to walk in them."

At this point the conversation came to an end, and I took the first opportunity of dropping back to my former place, not without a sneer at this potent baron of the north, who had ever professed such intense loyalty, hesitating now that a crisis had arrived. Gradually, and without any distinct intention of doing so, I fell behind the party, and began not only to reflect on my strangely cheerless position in life, but to dream of chances that might raise my fortunes to a level with my aspirations.

I happened that day to ride a grey horse which, from the beauty of his coat, was named Harfagher, and which, being the gift of a kinsman—and that kinsman an earl—was of great value, and might have carried any king in Christendom when charging for his crown. I had quite lost sight of my cousin's party, and was giving the reins to my fancy, when my charger, while pacing along with proud and self-satisfied step, pricked up his ears, started, and answered to a neigh that rang through the forest.

Reining up to listen, I heard the ringing of bridles, the tread of

hoofs on the turf, and, gradually emerging from a glade into the broad open space in which I was, appeared a gay and goodly company, with heralds and standard-bearers, and outriders and footmen, apparently journeying southward, and beguiling the way with hawking. I knew that the king had been north, to meet his son-in-law and daughter, the King and Queen of Scots, at Wark, or Roxburgh, and I supposed this might be the royal party on the way home. It was, anyhow, the most splendid hawking party I had ever seen ; and, with keen curiosity, I drew somewhat aside to watch the equestrians of both sexes as they passed.

While thus occupied, my eye was arrested by a demoiselle whose palfrey had against her will carried her away from her companions, and whose efforts were directed to resuming her place. Little notice, however, was taken of her movements, as a bittern had at that moment risen from a sedgy pool, and several of the party let loose their falcons. I, however, deemed her the more interesting object, and watched her with my whole attention.

The demoiselle appeared to be in her teens ; and she was still more beautiful than young, with dark blue eyes, auburn hair, a complexion in which the colours of the lily and the rose were blended with exquisite effect, and a figure, slender indeed, but elegant, inclining to be tall, and promising great perfections. Such was the fair being on whom I gazed.

“ By the light of Heaven !” I exclaimed to myself, “ never did man behold a more lovely vision ! Surely the Fairy Queen who carried True Thomas into Elfland would look a milkmaid by her side !”

Almost as I spoke I perceived that the object of my admiration was in a position the reverse of pleasant. Her palfrey, instead of yielding to her efforts, became more and more refractory ; and at length, taking the bit between its teeth, dashed furiously away, and,

with a determination which defied her utmost strength, made for the wood at a place where the trees grew so thick that her destruction seemed too probable.

At this point the attention of the hawking party was attracted to the demoiselle's dangerous position. As usually happens in such cases, there was much clamour and many words, but no appearance of prompt action, nor of any attempt to avert the peril. My presence of mind did not desert me, though I confess the life-blood thrilled at my heart as I perceived the manifest peril of one so young and so fair to look upon. However, I lost no time in tightening my rein, giving my charger the spur, and darting off to the rescue like an arrow from a bow.

Every Merley has prided himself on his horsemanship, and I have hinted that in this respect at least I was no degenerate scion of the race. At that period I should not, I believe, have feared to ride the Cid's steed Bavioca, nor even to have mounted the fabled Bucephalus, in spite of his heels and his horns. The demoiselle's palfrey, snorting furiously as he went, bore her onward to the point of danger; but, nevertheless, I rapidly neared them. Still I should have been too late. Indeed, they were on the very verge of the wood, and I was giving the fair equestrian up for lost, when her career was suddenly stopped, and her palfrey brought to a stand-still; and, looking in amazement at the sudden halt, I perceived—planted straight in the path, and standing with ears erect and hair bristling—a wild boar of fierce aspect, foaming with rage, and collecting all its strength to spring.

It seemed, so utter was her alarm, that the demoiselle could not even muster voice to scream. By this time, however, I—thanks to my gallant steed—was up, and grasping my hunting spear, placed myself, with a loud shout, between the boar and the object of his

attack ; and much mistaken am I if the monster, with all his ferocity, relished the change of circumstance.

Nevertheless, he kept his ground ; and when I rode round, instead of shrinking, he appeared astonished at my audacity, and, wheeling round in a circle, presented a menacing and formidable aspect. However, I undauntedly spurred to the attack. But my task was not easy. No sooner had I pierced him in his broad breast than he turned in such a way as to break my spear ; and, maddened by the wound I had inflicted, he rushed upon me with all his force and all his ferocity.

I had not now a moment to turn myself, nor an inch of room in which to move. Putting spurs to my horse, however, I cleared the boar at a leap ; and, availing myself of my gallant steed's activity, while my grisly antagonist was hampered with the broken spear that stuck in his breast, I drew my sword, and having, in passing, aimed a blow which partially disabled him, I faced quickly round, and terminated the breathless encounter by cutting his sinews.

Ere the encounter terminated several of the hunting party had pushed forward to the demoiselle's aid, lifted her, in a fainting condition, from her palfrey, and exerted themselves with success to restore her. I was still in my saddle, and had just turned round—still panting with my recent exertions—to observe what was going on, when towards me, accompanied by a dwarf, on a high horse, who talked and chattered, rode a man of middle stature, of the age of fifty-five or thereabouts, gorgeously attired, and with this peculiarity, that one of his eyelids hung down in such a way as to hide some of the dark part of the eyeball. I had never seen him before. But I knew there could be no mistake as to who he was. The oblique fall of the eyelid, the gorgeous dress, the white steed—a symbol of sovereignty—the dwarf riding by his side, and the



respectful attitude of those who attended, indicated that I was in the presence of Henry the King. I sprang from my steed, and uncovering my head, I, not without unpleasant reminiscences of the affair at Oxford, awaited his approach.

"Young gentleman," said the king, as he halted, and with him the long retinue of ladies, knights, squires, grooms, and spearmen, "I cannot too highly express my admiration of the courage you have shown in the rescue of my kinswoman. Inform me, I pray you, to whom I am indebted for so gallant a service; for, by God's head, it was fearlessly and well done. Thy name, brave youth?"

"Ralph Merley, my lord."

In an instant the king's countenance lost its gracious aspect.

"The son of Walter Merley, and one of the godless clerks who assailed the lord legate at Oxford," he said. "I grieve to hear it."

I was eager to attempt some explanation, but my tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of my mouth.

"It is even so," said the king, speaking to a young noble, in whom I recognised John, Earl Warren; "his silence condemns him. Youth," he added, turning to me with a look of high indignation, "I thank you for the service you have rendered my kinswoman. Nay, speak not. I cannot listen to the son of Walter Merley—he being such as he is. Ride on."

As the king spoke, the standard-bearer moved ceremoniously forward; Henry followed, and the long and brilliant retinue passed slowly by the spot where I stood. I was evidently an object of great curiosity to most of them; and I fancied that, as the fair demoiselle passed, she seemed to indicate by her looks that she, at least, was grateful.

I did not forget that look. In fact, the face of her whom I had saved began to haunt me. Young and romantic, I encouraged myself

---

to dwell upon it, and my imagination invested her with every excellence. Fortunately, in thinking of her, I almost forgot Henry the King, and the damsel's beauty left a greater impression than her royal kinsman's ungracious treatment; and, without allowing my ideas as concerned loyalty to the Confessor's crown to be influenced by the painful interview, I rather panted for the day when, by drawing my sword for the crown of England, I might have the opportunity of linking my name with achievements more important than an onslaught on a Roman cook and a hunt after a Roman priest.





The Maypole

## X.

## THE FIRST OF MAY.

**I**T was the 1st of May, and the festival being regarded throughout England as next in importance to that of Christmas, was ever joyously celebrated around the castle of the Merleys. In the year 1263,

though England was on the verge of civil war, and men expected that hostile armies would meet for conflict ere the harvest was gathered in, the inhabitants of the little borough, and of the adjacent villages and homesteads, awaited the approach of May-day with the wonted anticipation, and prepared, with the usual ceremonies, to bring the summer home.

On the evening of the last day of April the people of each parish assembled. Proceeding in parties to the woods, they spent the night in pastimes. When they returned they brought with them branches of trees and birch boughs, to adorn the places where they celebrated the festival.

The work of highest importance, however, was getting ready the maypole. Prodigious was the interest it excited. Having been drawn home by twenty or forty yoke of oxen, each with a nosegay attached to the horns, it was covered with herbs and flowers, and bound round with thongs from top to bottom; and, devoutly attended by hundreds, it was reared, with flags streaming from the top. Green boughs were then bound around it, the ground was covered with straw, and bowers and arbours were set up.

At the same time, the milkmaids, borrowing all the silver plate they could, and forming the various articles into pyramids, placed the structure on their heads, and danced from door to door, receiving a gratuity at each.

In good time the music struck up, and dancing commenced around the maypole. All was mirth and jollity; everybody was blithe and gay; and, at such times, I, Ralph Merley, was not the person to disdain to share in the general joy.

I was always particularly welcome among the populace on such occasions. I had inherited much of my grandmother's popularity, and gained some for myself by the interest which I manifested in the

rustic sports, and the readiness with which I took part in diversions and contests which most Norman gentlemen disdained. I had been so thoroughly inspired by my grandmother with sympathy for the conquered race, that I rather rejoiced to do as kings and nobles had done in earlier days ; and as, from the remarkable strength and dexterity I had gained by daily exercises in the tilt-yard and the chase, I generally proved my superiority over the burghers and peasants of my own age, I lost nothing on the side of dignity by my condescension.

Much, indeed, am I mistaken if it had not the opposite effect. Wherever I appeared I was treated by burgher and peasant with a degree of respectful deference which no mere Norman—not even a De Vesci or De Roos—could, at that time, have commanded from the natives of the north of England ; and, their notions of succession being loose, and their conviction that I was heir to the Merley baronies strong, they described me sometimes as “the Lord Ralph,” at others as “the young Lord de Merley.”

In the year and on the occasion to which I have referred, there was living in the household of Roger Merley de Merley a young Breton, named Conan de Gael, who was some years older than myself. The father of this squire was one of the foreigners who stood high in the king's favour ; and my kinsman, who cherished the hope of some day seeing Conan the husband of one of his three daughters, treated him with much distinction. Between the Breton and myself there was no love ; indeed, as I took some pains to exhibit my contempt for him, he hated me bitterly.

It happened that this Breton became deeply enamoured of a damsel who was the daughter of a tanner in the town, and caused her no slight annoyance by the vehemence of his addresses. Naturally supposing that she would be engaged, like her neighbours, in dancing

round the maypole, he offered to accompany me to witness the popular diversions ; and, not without a laugh to myself at his new-born interest in the locality, I made no objection.

Accordingly, we sallied forth, with several of the boys and strip-lings in the castle, and soon reached the scene, where around the maypole bells jingled, pipe and tabor sounded, ribbons fluttered ; where lads friaked, and where rustic nymphs laughed with such glee, and danced with such spirit, as, at times, to show where the garter of scarlet secured the stocking of blue.

Most of my companions were delighted with the scene, and, removed from the watchful eye of Sir John de Plessy, entered with vivacity into the merriment. Conan de Gael, however, was an exception. In fact, the maiden of his admiration was vigilantly guarded by a young tanner to whom she was to be married ; and, in his disappointment, the Breton was inclined to vent his ill humour on me. I was anxious, however, to avoid a quarrel, and, in my anxiety, took the very course which resulted in a quarrel of the most disagreeable kind.

It was, on such occasions, the custom of the young yeomen and burghers, in imitation of the chivalrous diversions of their superiors in rank, to prove their dexterity and skill in a game which somewhat resembled riding at the quintain. On the green sward was planted a strong pole, across the top of which was fixed a piece of wood, which turned on a spindle, and had very much the appearance of a turnstile. To one end of the piece of wood, however, was fixed a board, and to the other a sand-bag. Against this yeoman and burgher galloped by turns, striking the board with their staves. This was not, of course, difficult ; but, unless the assailant was dexterous in his movements, and made a speedy escape, he experienced the inconvenience of receiving between the shoulders a violent blow of the

sand-bag, and the mortification of being loudly jeered by the spectators.

I have stated that I was not in the least afraid of indulging, at fitting times, in a little familiarity with my inferiors in rank ; and, leaving the Breton to digest his ill-humour, I danced with the nymph with whom he was so eager to have speech, and then went to see the men trying their skill at the sand-bag.

At the moment I reached the green, accompanied by Conan de Gael and the other youths, a stout yeoman was endeavouring to make a stubborn colt charge, but was utterly unsuccessful in his efforts. I, hearing my name shouted, offered to try my skill on the animal, and, taking one of the peasants' staves, sprang into the saddle, and forcing the colt forward, performed the feat of striking the board and escaping the sand-bag with such success that I was loudly cheered. With an idea of rivalling my dexterity, the Breton mounted ; but, losing his temper, he failed to bring off the unruly steed ; and, receiving a violent blow in the back, was exposed to the boisterous laughter of the spectators.

"Who dared to laugh?" he asked, as, flushed with rage, he dismounted, and, with the yeoman's staff in his hand, came to the place where I was seated on the stump of a tree.

"I am afraid that I was one who laughed," said I, anxious to take the quarrel on myself ; and, knowing the temper of the populace, and dreading the possibility of a quarrel between them and a foreigner, I repeated, "It was I."

"Foundling!" he exclaimed, raising the staff as if to strike.

Indignant at the insult offered to one of their favourites, the crowd raised a shout of execration, and greatly alarmed me by the angry looks and threatening gestures they directed towards my insulter.

"Down with the outlandish man!" cried some.

"Kill the accursed foreigner!" shouted others. "Away with the foul Breton!"

"Foundling!" said I in surprise, after a pause. "Do you apply that word to me?"

"Yea, to you," he replied.

"Filthy Breton!" exclaimed I, giving way to an ungovernable burst of rage, and clenching my fist, "take that for insulting a Norman gentleman of the house of Merley, and for libelling a descendant of the Saxon earls of Northumberland!"

Conan de Gael rolled on the ground, and the crowd, raising a shout of triumph, rushed forward. I immediately felt deep regret at my indiscretion, and waved them back. I then assisted the Breton to rise from the ground. At first he appeared bent on combat. But thinking better of the business, and resolving not to make matters worse, he recoiled, and, amid the hooting and hisses of the crowd, strode away to the castle.

I soon found that it was deemed almost as serious an offence to have struck a son of the king's favourite as if I had struck a son of the king; and when I appeared, at the hour of supper, in the great hall, Roger Merley de Merley, with a frowning brow and indignant air, led me aside.

"Kinsman," said he, "it seems that you are determined to make my house too hot to hold you."

"I should be sorry to think I merited your displeasure," said I; "but I suppose you allude to my chastisement of the Breton. I beg you will think of the provocation."

"Nothing," he replied sharply, "could justify your conduct."

"I own it was rash," I said. "However, let us not waste words. I will come to the point at once. I was sent here without your

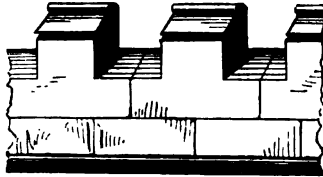


desiring my company. You have ever shown me the coldest countenance. I have burdened your hospitality too long. I will do so no longer. I inherit some, at least, of my father's courage and pride."

"Beware of boasting," interrupted Roger. "Remember that, if the squire be vainglorious, he is not worthy to become a knight."

"Thanks for your last lesson in chivalry," I replied. "But I was about to say that, in the stirring times that are coming, it will go hard with the son of Walter Merley if he do not win for himself more consideration among strangers than he has met with from those of his own name and blood. Farewell, kinsman."

I bowed haughtily to Roger Merley de Merley, and, with the intention of being in the saddle by daybreak, withdrew to make preparations for my journey.





Ralph leaving the Castle.

# XI.

## THE CRISIS.

**A**T the time when I, Ralph Merley, prepared to leave the castle of my ancestors, England, as I have already said, was almost on the eve of civil war. Men of peace, indeed, still hoped that the sword would not be drawn. For years, however, affairs had been

gradually coming to a crisis, and considering the questions at issue, it is not easy to see how the dispute could have been settled, save by an appeal to the god of battles.

In his youth, King Henry the Third was singularly unfortunate in his attempts at matrimony. Four or five princesses, whose hands he sought and coveted, eluded his grasp, and fortune seemed to be decidedly against him. In the end, however, it turned out that the fickle goddess had kept him so long sighing in vain that she might have it in her power to crown all his wishes by giving him, as a bride, the fairest princess in Christendom.

Henry was about twenty-seven years old, when his brother, Richard of Cornwall, afterwards King of the Romans, happened to be on the Continent, making preparations for his crusade. While thus occupied, he received a poem on the adventure of a Cornish hero named Blandin, inscribed to him by Eleanor, second daughter of Raymond Beranger, Count of Provence, a princess of almost unrivalled beauty and intellect. Having a wife at home, Richard was in no position to mark his appreciation of the compliment in the most gallant way; but he took care to intimate to his brother that a Provençal princess was in the market, and Henry, without delay, sent ambassadors to the court of Aix to demand her in marriage.

The match was not made without some difficulties. Raymond of Provence was poor, and Henry demanded a somewhat large dowry. But the count showed so high a spirit, that the king began to apprehend being again baffled.

"Conclude the treaty with or without money," wrote Henry to his ambassadors. "But, in any case, secure the damsel, and conduct her to me forthwith."

Accordingly the business was settled, and Eleanor of Provence ere long began to figure as Queen of England."

No sooner did the young queen appear in London than her beauty won golden opinions. Nothing, I have heard, could have exceeded the enthusiasm of the populace when she was conducted through London and crowned at Westminster. Perhaps, when seated at the coronation banquet, surrounded by the peers and prelates of England, and with the applause of the populace ringing in her ears, she indulged in the delusion that everything in the kingdom was intended for her gratification. She little dreamt of such a scene as that which I witnessed, when the same populace, who then cheered so lustily, attempted with huge stones to sink her barge in the Thames, and shouted, with rabid fury, "Drown the sorceress!"

In truth, the popularity of Eleanor of Provence was short-lived. It soon appeared, indeed, as if King Henry, in espousing the daughter of Count Raymond, had made himself responsible for the maintenance of half her kindred. Her uncles, on both sides, became bishops and earls in England; her kinswomen were brought from the Continent, and united to such Anglo-Normans as Richard de Burgh, Baldwin de Rivers, Earl of Devon, and Edward de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln; and the public exclaimed that the young nobles were united to the foreign damsels against their wills, and cried, "Shame on these outlandish marriages!"

It happened that Isabel of Angoulême, mother of King Henry, after the death of her husband, John, gave her hand in marriage to the Count de la Marche, and became the mother of sons and daughters. While the cry against foreigners was rising high in England, several of the king's uterine brothers and sisters reached our shores. Henry welcomed them heartily; and, as in the case of the queen's kindred, the men were ere long provided with earldoms and bishoprics, and the women with noble husbands. At an early

period of his reign, the king, acting under the influence of Hubert de Burgh, and other evil counsellors, had somewhat alienated the hearts of his people by an attempt to revoke the Great Charter ; and his foreign kinsmen revived the ill-feeling created by that impolitic attempt.

" We care nothing about your charters," they openly said. " We are not Englishmen, and we have nothing to do with English laws."

The discontent became, meantime, deep and general.

" England swarms with foreigners," everybody cried ; " and no one can prosper in this land save a Provençal or a Poitevin."

Everything that the unhappy king now did gave rise to murmurs. Alphonso of Castille, surnamed the Wise, having some claims on Gascony, invaded that province ; and Henry, in order to terminate the dispute, consented to a marriage between his eldest son, Prince Edward, and Alphonso's young sister, Eleanor of Castille. Even this raised loud complaints ; and when the princess reached England, loud murmurs arose because she hung her chamber with palls of silk and tapestry, and covered the floor with arras, after the fashion of her country, and people complained that Spaniards were added to the foreigners who were devouring England.

" Poitevins and Provençals, and now Spaniards," was the cry, " are enriched with revenues and covered with honours, to the utter exclusion of the English."

Meanwhile the king's improvidence was involving him in serious debts and embarrassing poverty. In truth, what with the avarice of foreign relatives, and the extortions of the Pope, he was seldom far from the verge of bankruptcy, and only saved himself by gifts from the citizens, exactions from the Jews, and loans from his brother Richard, King of the Romans. He was so reduced at one

time, that his circumstances were well-nigh desperate. It was no longer poverty he suffered, but want.

"It would be greater charity," he said, at this stage of his career—"it would be greater charity to bestow money on me than on those who go from door to door asking alms."

At length, in 1258, a bad harvest, and the king's indiscretion, brought affairs to a crisis. When the nation was on the verge of famine, Henry, tempted by the Pope with an offer of the crown of Sicily for his second son, Edmund, accepted it on conditions which rendered it necessary for him to summon a Parliament. The barons, ever on the watch for opportunities to lessen the royal authority and increase their own, had no idea of allowing such an opportunity as this to pass; and when Henry, leading by the hand his son Edmund, arrayed as King of Sicily, entered Westminster Hall, he was surprised to find that most of the barons were in armour. A violent dispute took place; and between the king and Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk and Earl-Marshal of England, an altercation occurred as to the unfortunate business of Robert de Roos, Lord of Hamlake, in which both the king and the earl lost their temper and descended from their dignity.

It seems that Roger Bigod seized the occasion to make a speech in justification of Robert de Roos; and the king described the Earl-Marshal as a traitor, and menaced him with punishment.

"You lie!" exclaimed Bigod, scowling; "I never have been, and never will be a traitor! Besides," asked he, "what can you do to me? How can you harm me, if you are ruled by justice?"

"I can seize your corn, and cause it to be thrashed and sold," answered the king; "and thus you will be subdued and humbled."

"Then," said the earl, "I will cut off the heads of those who thrash it, and send them to you."

In the same Parliament a quarrel took place between William de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, the king's uterine brother, and Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, the king's brother-in-law. It seems that Llewellyn, Prince of Wales, was at that time ravaging the Marches, and that De Montfort was supposed to be in communication with the Welsh chief.

"I should not fear the Welsh," remarked Valence—"if it were not for traitors nearer home," he continued, glancing significantly at De Montfort, "by whom they are encouraged and abetted."

"Whom do you call traitors?" asked De Montfort.

"You, first of all!" replied Pembroke, with anger.

Both rushed forward to terminate the dispute by a personal encounter. The king, however, threw himself between them; and, after some difficulty, persuaded them to put up their swords.

It is not wonderful that, in a Parliament where scenes of such violence were enacted, no business was soberly transacted. However, the king and the barons agreed to assemble at Oxford on the day of St. Barnabas; and accordingly, about the middle of June, they did meet, with the resolution of coming to the point. But the barons brought with them forces which completely overawed the king and his friends, and enabled them to dictate their own terms. Acting under the inspiration of Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, they divested the crown of all authority, and cantonised the kingdom among twenty-four of their number. Moreover, by way of enabling them to do very much as they pleased, they enacted that the king should confirm the Great Charter; that the chancellor, treasurer, and other ministers of state, should be chosen by the four-and-twenty; that the king's castles and all strongholds should be placed in their custody; and that it should be death for any person to oppose, directly or indirectly, what should be ordered by them.

It was evident that these articles were so framed as to strip the crown of all power ; and to these articles, known as "The Provisions of Oxford," the king's continental kinsmen declined to swear. For their contumacy the Poitevins were banished the land ; and the king, and his brother, the King of the Romans, acting under that necessity which knows no law, swallowed their scruples, and took the oaths to observe Provisions which, if observed, would virtually have changed England from a monarchy to an oligarchy. It has since been the fashion to describe this assembly at Oxford as "The Mad Parliament ;" but at the time its proceedings were loudly applauded, and the Provisions were ceremoniously proclaimed through every county in England.

It would have been of great advantage to the king, in his struggle with the barons, if he could have enlisted the sympathy and secured the support of the citizens of London, who were then rich and influential. But between the court of Westminster and the city of London no good-will existed. Indeed, from the beginning neither Henry nor his queen had acted towards the Londoners in such a way as to secure that popularity which would now have been of more value than an armed host.

Early in his reign, Henry, conceiving that it would be advantageous to have a national fair, granted the Abbot of Westminster the privilege of holding one, and ordered that the traders of London should shut up their shops, and carry their wares westward. The weather being most unfavourable, the national fair proved an utter failure ; and the rain, penetrating the tents, so damaged the goods, that the traders cursed everything connected with the business, not sparing its royal projector. The consequence was a feeling of bitterness between the court and the city ; and soon after, when Henry's servants went eastward one day, to see the citizens exercising at the



quintain, they were handled with a degree of roughness that caused the king much annoyance.

Nor did Henry, on his part, refrain from manifesting the dislike which he felt for the wealthy citizens. When he was in extreme poverty, and supplies were refused by Parliament, one of his courtiers advised him to raise money by selling his plate and jewels.

"But where could I find purchasers when money is so scarce?" said the king.

"In the city of London," was the reply.

"Ay!" said Henry. "If the treasures of Augustus Cæsar were in the market, the city of London would purchase them, I suppose. Those clownish citizens who call themselves barons, are an inexhaustible treasury in themselves."

But if the feeling with which Henry was regarded by the Londoners was bad, the antipathy with which they regarded Eleanor was intense. The queen, indeed, was most unpopular; and her unpopularity arose from the disputes she had with the citizens about dues at Queen-hithe and about queen-gold, both of which formed part of the revenues of a queen consort of England, and which she exacted with a rigour to which the Londoners had not been accustomed.

It was in vain that Henry, finding himself opposed by the wealthy citizens, endeavoured to counteract their influence by reviving the old Saxon custom of folk-motes, and thereby showing the populace that they had a political existence as well as their rich neighbours. It would not do. Behind that old Roman wall, men of all breeds and of every clime, with no traditions save such as inspired them with hatred to the monarchy, formed a fierce and lawless democracy. Nor was this republic without its chief and its demagogues. As in former days the Londoners had boasted of their Fitzosbert and Con-

stantine Fitz-Anulph, so they now had their Stephen Buckerel and their Thomas Fitz-Richard.

The disadvantage to the royal cause, from the antipathy entertained by the majority of the Londoners towards the king and queen, at once appeared. No sooner, indeed, did the barons enter into an association to stand by the Provisions of Oxford with their lives and fortunes, than they were cordially joined by the citizens of London.

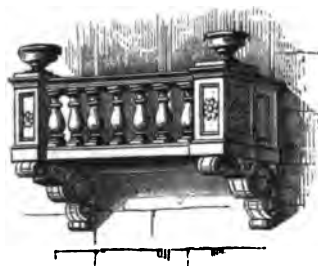
Henry the Third was a lover of peace ; but no king with the Plantagenet blood in his veins could have submitted patiently to his crown being divested of every prerogative that made it worth wearing. For more than two years, indeed, he remained almost quiescent, and during that time a reaction took place. In fact, the nation began to discover that the great barons were bent on their own aggrandizement, and indifferent to the common weal ; and people rather rejoiced than otherwise, when, in 1261, Henry intimated that he intended to resume his authority, and produced a papal bull to relieve him from the oath he had taken, under compulsion, at Oxford.

Accordingly, Henry did resume supreme power, and intrusted the administration of affairs to men in whom he had confidence. For a time the royal cause seemed to prosper ; and Simon de Montfort, the leader of the four-and-twenty barons, having left England in a fury, remained on the Continent. In 1263, however, a renewal of the struggle became imminent ; and the partisans of both parties, who hitherto had sometimes taken up arms, but refrained from coming to blows, bethought them of girding on their mail, and drawing their swords, to bring the quarrel to a decisive issue.

It was at this crisis that I, Ralph Merley, ventured into the world, unfriended and unsided, but not without that hope with which youth

gilds the future. Long ere break of day, on the 2nd of May, I roused myself from repose, and prepared to be gone. I went to the stables ; I saddled and bridled my good steed ; I mounted ; and, passing the warders without question, I rode out through the castle gate. I left the little town behind ; and, without a sigh, but not without a vague anticipation that I should one day be great in the land from which I was departing poor and disgraced, I rode southward.

As I entered the forest glade, dawn began to brighten into light, and the deer stirred their antlers and rose to begin another day. A hare crossed my path. I was not more superstitious than my neighbours—indeed, I was less superstitious—yet, like them, I deemed this an omen of evil. I almost wished a wolf to cross my path, that such an omen of good fortune might counteract the effect the hare had produced on my spirits. I little thought, at the time, that, ere proceeding far on my journey, I should have a much closer acquaintance with wolves than was either agreeable or safe.





## XII.

## WOLVES IN ENGLAND.

IN the year 1255, when I, Ralph Merley, was still living under the roof of my grandmother, at Linden, and day by day enduring, at the hand of Master Robert, the most cruel castigations because I did not learn what he was unable to teach, I remember that a travelling merchant, coming thither to offer his wares, brought tidings that Louis, King of France—then recently returned from the Holy Land—had sent to Henry, King of England, a present in the shape of a wonderful beast, known as an elephant. It was believed that this was the only elephant ever seen in England,

or even in the countries on this side of the Alps. Accordingly, it was the object of enormous curiosity, and the people flocked together in crowds to see so novel a sight.

It does not strike me as being altogether improbable that, to our descendants in centuries yet to come, a wolf in England may seem as extraordinary an apparition as an elephant. Marvellous, I must needs say, are the changes wrought by time and the ordinances of men, either for good or evil. As I recall the events, and fancy myself living again in the days of my youth, it seems but yesterday when I left the castle of the Merleys to push my fortune in the South, and gratify my aspirations after that life of bustle and excitement of which I then knew little save by hearsay; and yet so great is the alteration produced in England by a few decades of years, that if a foreigner, then familiar with the country, were now to revisit it, he would hardly recognise some of the places which he then best knew, save by the hills, and valleys, and running streams. Mighty, in truth, has been the influence of time and of laws devised with wisdom and patriotism, and administered without fear or favour, in giving the land peace and prosperity.

The country, as I have hinted, save in its hills, and vales, and rivers, differed, in many respects, from that which the traveller now beholds. One third was covered with forests; another third was uncultivated moor and heath; and towards the German Ocean, the shires which had formed the kingdoms of East Anglia and Mercia, when the Saxons gave kings and nobles to the British isles, were almost separated by a waste of waters, interspersed with sedgy shelves and islets, extending for about a hundred miles, and known as the "Fen" country.

In the forests which then spread over the country were sheltered many wild animals which have already become extinct, and many

others which, in process of time, will become extinct. The wild boar ranged free in the woods even in the vicinity of London ; and wolves, in spite of all efforts made to extirpate them, were not only numerous but dangerous.

It is understood, indeed, that, at an early period, wolves abounded quite as much in England as they now do in Scotland or Ireland, and that strong measures were taken by the Saxon kings, especially by Edgar, and by the Norman sovereigns, for their extirpation. Of Edgar it is said that he took enormous trouble in hunting and destroying the wolves in England ; that, finding how many of the ravenous animals had escaped his pursuit, and taken refuge in the forests and mountains of Wales, he commanded that the annual tribute hitherto paid in money by the Welsh princes to the English crown should be paid in wolves' heads, and that as many as three hundred were yearly sent to England as evidences of the destruction going on. It is well known, too, that, after the Conquest, William the Norman, Henry Beaulerc, and King John granted lands and castles to the Barons De Umfraville, De Roos, and Briwere, to be held on condition of hunting down wolves.

Nevertheless, wolves still continued to exist in sufficient numbers to do much mischief and to cause much alarm, infesting the fold, the field, and the forest, proving destructive to flocks and herds, and preying upon the deer and the wild cattle. In some places, I have heard, and especially in a part of Angus, in Scotland, known as Glennorsdale, they refrained from meddling with the domestic cattle, preying only on the wild ; but in most places, and especially in the north of England, they were savage and ferocious, not only making dreadful havoc among cattle, and attacking men, but prowling around villages and hamlets, and seizing upon children who were unwary enough to stray into the forest glades.

Not seldom did it happen, in early centuries, that men travelling through Yorkshire were pursued by packs of wolves, and exposed to the utmost peril. On such occasions they could only recommend themselves to the protection of St. Julian, and do their best, with the aid of Heaven, to find safety. It was not always easy to reach a place of refuge ; but there was one locality, at least, in which it was nobly provided.

In the Dickering Wapentake, situated at the north-east extremity of the East Riding of Yorkshire, at the recess of the shore, a sandbank runs out into the sea like a little tongue of land, such as is called a "file," whence a village on it is named "Filey ;" and more inland is the parish of Folkton, situated in a valley on the northern verge of the wolds, and comprehending within its limits the township of Flixton.

In the reign of Athelstane, Flixton belonged to a Saxon thane named Achorne ; and he, considering the peril incurred by travellers, resolved to erect a place of refuge. Accordingly, Achorne built an hospital "to defend passengers from wolves, that they might not be devoured"—for so the record runs ; and this hospital he tenanted with an alderman and fourteen brethren and sisters, whose duty was to receive the travellers driven thither, and to afford to them hospitality, till the wolves, having exhausted their disappointment and rage in howling and whining, deemed it proper to go off in search of other prey.

In the days of my youth the wolves were less numerous than in the time of Athelstane and Achorne, and the peril more lightly regarded. Indeed, I confess I felt greater apprehensions of the men of the forest, who had not then been taught, as they since have been, to draw their bows only against the enemies of their country. But as, on the second day's journey, I traversed Yorkshire, I found myself in

circumstances which made me recall with horror many an old story of travellers being attacked by wolves, and sigh for a sight of the hospital at Flixton, and for the hospitality of the alderman, and brethren and sisters, who enacted their parts as guardian angels to those who asked refuge and hospitality in the name of God and St. Julian.

It was not, I may add before relating my adventure, till after the ninth year of King Edward's reign, when the king's commission was issued to Peter Corbet for the destruction of wolves, by means of men, dogs, and engines, in all forests, parks, and other places, that security against the attacks of these ravenous animals began to be felt. Now, since Peter Corbet and others have executed their commission with energy and good faith, Englishmen can pass the day without apprehensions of their children being devoured, and sleep through the night without being roused to hear of their deer and cattle being destroyed.







Ralph's Night with the Wolves

### XIII.

#### MY ADVENTURE WITH WOLVES.

**I**T was the second day after I left the castle of my kinsman, Roger Merley de Merley ; and, having passed the night at a rustic hostelry, where there was much more interest shown in the position of national

affairs than I should have expected in a place so sequestered, I mounted Harfagher to resume my journey. Before leaping into the saddle I was carefully instructed by mine host as to the direction in which I should ride, and the precise spot at which I should find food for man and provender for beast ; and having, not without difficulty, succeeded in following his instructions, I found myself at noon regaling myself with such cheer as a little forest inn afforded, while my steed rested and refreshed itself under the shadow of an oak that grew before the door.

I was just preparing to renew my journey when the tinkling of bells arrested my attention. Some chapmen, wearing cloaks, and riding on their packhorses, which were laden with wool, halted to bait. I inquired my best way southward, and was told that I had only to keep the beaten track in order to reach a secure resting-place for the night.

"But," said one of the chapmen, after narrowly scanning me, "I hardly think the forest-path is without danger to a solitary traveller, even when armed and mounted. There are rumours of outlaws being about in force, and of the wolves being in a ravenous mood."

"Thanks for your courtesy," said I, giving my horse the rein. "Against robbers I have the protection of my good sword, and against wolves I have the security of my good steed, which has never yet failed its rider."

"As you will, young 'squire," said the chapman, who I believed was eager to have my company on the road to aid in defending his woolpacks ; "but bear in mind that the battle is not always to the strong, nor the race to the swift."

"Forewarned is forearmed," replied I, giving my horse the spur, and taking my way southward.

I found the forest path even more solitary than I had anticipated;

and, except for the wild animals that now and then started up at my horse's feet, and made for the thicket, I had nothing to occupy my attention. As I rode along, I, according to my wont in such circumstances, began to muse ; and as I rapidly reviewed the events which had coloured the last few weeks of my life—especially my quarrel with Conan de Gael, the Breton—I began, for the first time, to ask myself what my kinsman, the earl, would say on these subjects, and to torture myself with the idea that I might have incurred his displeasure. I was too young, however, to dwell long on any reflection that caused regret ; and I gladly turned to the more pleasing memory of the fair damsel whom I had rescued from the wild boar, wondering what chance I had of again meeting her in the world into which I was going, and vowing, at all events, to ascertain who she was. Indeed, I confess I did even dream of rivalling the romantic exploit of Hasting, the sea-king, or Harold Hardrada, the far-famed King of Norway, or some other of the heroes of whose adventures I had read in a chronicle with which my father in his youth had gifted the abbey of Newminster. I recalled how Hasting had brought off the finest woman in Luna, and how Hardrada, when forced to leave Constantinople, carried off a niece of the Empress of the East, and afterwards reigned with high renown in the country of his birth, realizing the aspiration which he, at fifteen, when escaping from the fatal battle of Stiklestad, had expressed in scaldic verse—"A day will come when my name will be great in the land I have now left."

I believe I was still, in imagination, pursuing a heroic career, and building castles in the air, to be inhabited by myself and the fair demoiselle who had lately occupied my mind, when I was recalled to my real position by my horse starting somewhat suddenly at two wolves which crossed the path, and eyed both horse and rider

with a look of audacity which indicated too surely that they were bent on mischief, and that they had companions at no great distance ; for these ravenous animals, while rather cowardly on ordinary occasions, grow ferocious and bold when they have congregated in numbers, and tasted blood. I was not long left in doubt ; for, from that side of the path from which they had come, I heard a loud howling, and presently, to my alarm, I perceived, close behind me, and coming directly on my track, a pack running in a line.

I have said I was alarmed ; but I had been too much accustomed to the forest and the chase to lose my presence of mind. Aware how much wolves are daunted by the voice of a man, and aware also how cautious wolves are in attacking a human being, and that they require much time to work themselves up to the point, I shouted in my loudest tone ; and, knowing that the likeliest way to keep them at bay was to maintain the utmost steadiness, I took care to repress every indication of fear, and rode calmly onwards, as if riding among hounds. To my dismay, however, my loud voice and dauntless air produced no effect. It was apparent that they had tasted blood, and thirsted for more ; and it was now that, seeing they were coming on with the ferocity of fiends, I thought of the hospital at Flixton, recalled, with a shudder, the stories I had heard of travellers torn to pieces and devoured in like circumstances, and recommended myself to the protection of God and our lady of Newminster.

“Heavens !” soliloquized I, after muttering a prayer, “have I, then, left the home of my ancestors, whose deeds of arms have been celebrated by minstrels, and whose ashes repose in sacred abbeys, to die this most horrible of deaths, and to disappear from the face of the earth without a brave deed to illustrate my name in this world, and without a mass to save my soul in the next ?”

Meanwhile, the wolves every moment became more audacious, and I had little hope, save in the speed and endurance of my horse. I knew, indeed, how perseveringly and pertinaciously wolves, when in a pack, pursue their destined victims, and what danger there is, in case of the chase lasting long enough, of the swiftest and strongest steed being in the end run down. But I did not despair of reaching the hostelry to which I had been directed ; and it was with clenched teeth, and a determination that the ravenous horde should have neither the horse nor the rider on easy terms, that I shook my reins and applied my spur.

It seemed, at first, that my anticipations of escape were to be easily gratified. In fact, Harfagher answering readily and willingly to rein and spur, rapidly cleared the ground ; and, on turning my head, I rejoiced to see how much the distance had increased between me and the long, yellow, serpent-like train. I rode on, nevertheless, without drawing my bridle or slackening my pace, and soon left them so far behind that I should not have known, but for their yells, that they were still following keenly on my track.

I soon found, however, that, as the chapman had reminded me, the race is not always to the swift. I was just congratulating myself on the certainty of escape, when I found, to my consternation, that a new mishap had befallen me. At first I refused to credit my senses. But there was no mistake about the matter. My horse was lame—so lame that he every moment slackened his pace.

I now well-nigh gave myself up for lost ; and presently I heard my pursuers, no longer, to judge by their yells, far behind, but so near that I could hear the noise of their feet as they came rustling through the wood with their never-ceasing gallop. It was in vain that I attempted to stir the courage of my horse with the spur. He only answered with a groan ; and at length swerving,

as if hoping to find some relief, he bounded from the main path and carried me into an alley, which I speedily found had no outlet sufficient for man and horse.

I was soon brought to a stand-still by the branches, and I paused in horror and perplexity. But there was no time to lose. Indeed, my pursuers were within thirty yards of me, and I saw that the only chance of escape for myself and my steed was to endeavour to save myself by climbing a tree, leaving Harfagher free and unburdened to make whatever effort he could to escape the teeth and fangs that threatened him with destruction. Instead, however, of rushing directly to the attack, the wolves broke into two lines, and, sweeping by on opposite sides, they again met, and, forming into a circle, cut off all chance of retreat.

It was no time for hesitation, and I hesitated no longer. Catching at the branch of a large tree, I swung myself upwards, and climbed to a place of security ; while my horse, free to extricate himself by any means he could, apparently proud of being left to his own discretion and master of his movements, tossed back his head, and collected all his energy for a brave effort to escape. Forgetting his lameness for the nonce, he suddenly charged the circle at full speed. In vain the wolves attempted to seize his legs ; excited and alarmed, he contrived to clear them at a leap, and, snorting with terror, but still turning his face northwards, bounded away through the trees, the wolves following in close pursuit.

I now experienced the relief of being left in solitude ; and, believing that it was by the sight of my horse rather than of myself that they had been attracted, I began to think of descending, and making my escape ere they could return. My northern caution, however, prevailed. I cared not to risk the hazard that might arise from my immediately quitting my place of refuge, and I was still

in doubt, when, somewhat to my surprise, the whole pack came back.

I concluded that the horse had fallen a victim ; my own situation, however, was far too unpleasant, and far too perilous, not to occupy my thoughts more than the fate of any charger, however gallant. Evidently the wolves were determined that I should not escape ; and as they lay panting round the root of the tree, with their mouths open and their long tongues protruding, and turned their red eyes wistfully up at me, I almost resolved to terminate my horrible suspense by descending and rushing amongst them, sword in hand. But such a feeling was merely momentary. In truth, I confess I should rather have faced a thousand human foes than those monsters, with their ferocious aspects and fiery eyes.

By this time the shades of evening had fallen ; and, as evening deepened into night, I conceived the idea of baffling the vigilance of the wolves by making my way from tree to tree. But in this I was disappointed. No matter whether I crept, or crawled, or leaped, whenever and however cautiously I moved, they rose, with a yell, from their recumbent posture, and sprang up, as if to catch me in my fall. However, I derived one advantage from my movements, as I got close to the broad path from which my horse, in his distress, had carried me, and found myself in a tree whose branches grew in such a way as to afford some prospect of rest during the watches of the night, which had now fairly settled over the forest.

I confess that, imperilled as I was, this was an important consideration ; and I was becoming quite faint with hunger and with fatigue, which had been much increased by the efforts I had made in passing from tree to tree. At length I felt utterly exhausted, and, making myself as secure as I could, I stretched myself on the branches. I felt so inclined to sleep, that, for a long time, I had a

severe struggle to keep my eyes open. But this was a struggle that could not last ; and, with my resolute persecutors still congregated round the root of the tree, their eyes still glaring towards the place I occupied among the branches, and their howls of savage impatience still resounding through the forest, I yielded to nature, and, in spite of my uneasy posture, and the vigilant watch of the monsters panting to tear me limb from limb, fell fast asleep, and lost all sense of danger.



Wolf Chasing by Moonlight.



## XIV.

## A RESCUE AND A RECOGNITION.



AWOKE with a start ere break of day, and, in my confusion, well-nigh tumbled from my perch. Had I fallen, and escaped a broken neck, I should not have continued so long in the body as to have had an opportunity of even breathing a prayer for my soul's salvation; for there were the wolves, innumerable, as it seemed to me, both small and great. Indeed, I supposed their numbers had increased during the night, and concluded that the new comers had been attracted from afar by the prospect of a banquet.

Certain it was, however, that they had not got me for supper, and I had no intention of allowing them to have me for breakfast. Life is sweet, especially in youth, when hope so readily gilds the future; and cold, hungry, and imperilled as I was, I devoutly thanked Heaven that I was still in the land of the living and the place of hope.

It seemed that, no doubt while moving uneasily in my slumbers, I had so placed one of my legs that it hung down through the branches, and each of the wolves, in anticipation of my fall, was on the alert, probably with a view of securing a good share of the expected banquet. Many ran to and fro, tumbling over their companions; some sat quietly on their hams, with their eyes turned

upwards in expectation ; while others, not quite satisfied with the pleasures of hope, made ambitious efforts to leap sufficiently high to reach my foot. It was a horrible sight which the light of the moon, shining through the trees, revealed to me ; and I vowed rather to eat my own flesh, than, by giving way to impatience, run the risk of being devoured by that ferocious horde.

As I formed this deliberate resolution, and settled myself to endure the evils of my present plight as patiently as nature had given me the faculty of doing, and, ever and anon, in a voice of bitter wrath, shouted defiance at my persecutors, the morning star and the dawn of day approached ; darkness and cold speedily gave way to light and warmth ; and the sun, heralded by gold and amber scattered in his path, appeared " to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day." I now thought, with a sigh, of the chapmen whose company I had so cavalierly declined, and watched keenly, in the hope of their passing.

Hours, however, passed over without any prospect of a rescue, and I began to feel the agony of hunger, when suddenly the wolves started and erected their ears. My heart beat with joy as I became aware that the excitement displayed by them was caused by the tread of horses and the rattle of mail ; and, ere long, my eyes were gladdened by the welcome spectacle of a body of armed men approaching in feudal array. I did not take time to think whether they might prove friends or foes ; it was sufficient for me at that moment that they were human, and that they would deliver me from the danger of being devoured by the ravenous brutes that had waited all night in the expectation of tearing me to pieces.

At the head of this little army—for such it appeared—rode a strong and handsome knight, who might have reached the age of twenty-two. He was armed in chain mail, and wore one of the

scarfs then lately introduced, and known as cointises, which, passing over the right shoulder and under the left arm, fluttered in the morning breeze. According to the Saxon fashion, re-introduced by Henry Beauclerc when he married the Saxon Maude, he had a short beard, and hair waving in locks. But, though wearing his hair in the Saxon fashion, he was evidently genuine Norman, and his aquiline features, haughty air, and an expression of countenance which told, more plainly than words could have done, that he believed himself of a race born to conquer and command, indicated him, beyond question, as a descendant of the valiant Northmen who sailed up the Seine with Rollo, and wrested Neustria from Charles the Simple. Behind him rode his squires, followed by several men-at-arms, one of whom bore his banner ; and the rear was brought up by a body of horsemen, making in all about a hundred.

My knowledge of heraldry, which was not slight, enabled me to recognise the banner as that of the proud house of Fitz-John ; and, guided by this fact, I was led almost instantly to the conclusion that the gallant warrior before me was John Fitz-John, who had years earlier figured among the scholars of Oxford, and who recently, on the death of his father, succeeded to the rank of a baron of England.

I was so much occupied with making the observations the result of which I have just chronicled, that for the time I almost forgot my enemies the wolves ; but when my attention again turned to them, I perceived that they were in perplexity and consternation. For an instant indeed it seemed, so eagerly were they bent on prey, that they actually meditated trying conclusions with the approaching horsemen. But no sooner did they realize the full extent of their danger than their cowardly instinct returned in full force, and they appeared too much overpowered with terror even to make a timely escape.

Nor, in truth, had they much opportunity of deliberation. At a signal from the knight, the horsemen dashed in among the astonished pack, and using their swords, soon wounded and killed several. The howling and whining of the wounded and dying produced a strong effect on their comrades, and while some turned tail and scampered hurriedly away, others unresistingly allowed themselves to be slain.

Ere the carnage was over, I had sprung to the ground, and, sword in hand, enjoyed my revenge. The field having been cleared, I approached the knight and expressed my thanks.

"I have been in that tree all night," said I. "I had given myself up for lost. I am grateful for being rescued, and I rejoice that I owe the favour to one whom I have met in other days,—you, if I err not, being the Lord Fitz-John."

"And you?" asked the knight.

"I am Ralph Merley," replied I, "who was one of the youngest scholars of Oxford, when my Lord Fitz-John was known as the 'handsome scholar.'"

I did not quite comprehend till then the feelings of brotherhood that linked together men who had worn the cap and gown, and belonged to the same nation. As I spoke, however, the young baron's haughty air vanished in a moment.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, as he dismounted and took my hand; "I well remember the little David who aspired to slay a Goliath in the person of the lord legate's master of the cooks. Nevertheless, I should rather have expected to meet you holding disputations with some learned men like Michael Scott, than as a squire, and fighting with wolves."

"It has been a cursed mishap," said I; "and what is worst of all, I fear they have devoured my steed, which was an earl's gift, and to me worth an earl's ransom."

"Nay," said Fitz-John, "all's well that ends well. Had you not met with this mishap, I might not have chanced to meet with you; and for your good steed, if you mean one of the gallantest greys on which I ever set eyes, I bring you good news. He has been luckier than you fancy."

"Thanks to Epona, the goddess of horses!" exclaimed I, joyfully.

"Yes," continued Fitz-John; "he sought safety at the hut of some foresters, who have him in keeping, and who, supposing his rider eaten and digested, are not unwilling to sell him to the first comer who will pay what they demand."

"If they dare," I exclaimed, "I'll make them wish they had rather pawned their souls to the Prince of Darkness."

"I should have thought little of bringing him away by force," added Fitz-John, laughing, "but I relished not the idea of the owner turning up, and branding me as a horse-stealer."

On hearing that Harfagher was safe, I clapped my hands, and exhibited a degree of joy which made Fitz-John smile.

"Well," said he, "I respect a warrior who loves his horse, be he knight, squire, yeoman, or groom; and so I will send back and have your steed restored to you. Meanwhile we may halt; and, as you must be well-nigh famished, you cannot better employ the time than by lining the inner man with pasty and Bordeaux wine. Whither journey you?"

"To London," I answered.

"So do I," said he; "wherefore, when you are refreshed and remounted, we can ride in company, and beguile the way with talk of earlier days, and forget your late predicament. I hold myself not less hardy than others, yet I should little have liked your perch for the night. But now you will have an opportunity, by a hearty meal, of making amends for a comfortless couch."

A halt was called accordingly; and while one of Fitz-John's horsemen was despatched to bring up my charger, the sumpter mules were led forward; and I, seated on the grass, did full justice to the fare set before me. After satisfying my hunger, and cheering my courage with the wine of Bordeaux, I had the gratification of finding my steed restored. I mounted, and took my place beside the young baron. As the word was given to move on, I looked round to the spot, which was strewn with the carcasses of several of my nocturnal persecutors.

"Behold," exclaimed Fitz-John, "how low lie your late foes! How the contemptible cowards yielded themselves to the slaughter! But they are like the rabble—only daring when they have such odds as twenty to one in their favour."

"Think you so meanly of the rabble?" said I.

"*Par Dieu!* yes. How can I think otherwise? A Norman gentleman is equal to fifty of them, at least; just as one of my noble hounds has more real courage than twenty of these wolves."

I confess I did not relish the comparison; but I wished not, at the time, to provoke controversy; so I remained silent, and waited for my comrade to touch on some subject about which we were less likely to differ.





High Barnet Church.

## XV.

## OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

• **A**S we rode on, side by side, John Fitz-John drew from me some account of my life since my escape from Oxford—my residence in the castle of Roger Merley de Merley—my unfortunate interview with King Henry in the northern forest—my quarrel with Conan de Gael—and my departure from the castle of my kinsman.

On hearing my narrative, my companion seemed to consider that I could not but be a partisan of the twenty-four barons, and looked disappointed when I announced myself a resolute royalist, and frankly explained the reasons for my abhorrence of oligarchical rule. However, we discussed the questions at issue in a friendly spirit, and by way of avoiding any such argument as might have led to a quarrel, we finally consented to a truce till we should reach London.

"There," said he, "we part, to divide the country between us."

"Nay," replied I, "both parties cannot triumph. Either king or barons must conquer; so let us not talk of dividing the country. I am not for compromise."

As we gradually advanced southward the landscape became much more bright and lively. I, who had so long been accustomed to the north, where traces of the devastation wrought by the Conqueror were still visible—where wild-fowl screamed in the solitudes, and where wild cattle and beasts of prey roamed the country—was delighted with the light, laughing aspect of the feudal castles that crowned each eminence, and with the white and fresh-chiselled abbeys, surmounted by towers or belfries, and situated in pleasant places, where men dedicated to God's service kept alive the flame of ancient learning, and dispensed befitting charity to the indigent and poor; and I daily comprehended more clearly why men of pride and ambition were ready to do anything rather than surrender their claim to rule such a land.

We had arrived in the fair and fertile shire of Hertford, and were, if I remember aright, in the neighbourhood of St. Albans, when a horseman, riding at full speed, overtook us; and, as he reined up and halted suddenly to address John Fitz-John, I instantly recognised the wandering knight who had appeared at Linden and so much interested my boyish fancy by his talk about battles and tournaments.

"My noble friend," said the knight, "thou ridest well attended."

"The times are troublous, Sir Rufus," answered the young baron; "and I fear I have mine enemies as well as other men."

"The times are troublous," repeated Sir Rufus, in a loud voice; "and I tell thee, Lord Fitz-John, for thine instruction, that more troublous still are they likely to be."



"It seems too probable," replied Fitz-John; "and I need no prophet to foretell what I myself so clearly perceive."

"I tell thee, Lord Fitz-John," cried Sir Rufus, in an excited voice, "that ere the sun sets Simon de Montfort will be in England. He comes to punish the sins of the nation—to bind kings in chains and princes in fetters of iron. It is I who say it—I, who have made myself the terror of the infidel Turk and the heretical Greek, and who now go to execute God's wrath on the unbelieving Jew." And, without waiting for a reply, Sir Rufus spurred in the direction of London, urging on his horse to its full speed.

"Who is he?" I asked.

"Sir Rufus Ribaut."

"A madman?"

"It is reasonable to think so."

"Was he always so?"

"No; it seems he fell desperately in love with some foreign demoiselle who was of too high rank for him. She became the bride of another; and he has ever since been wandering about, looking for his enemy, and threatening to kill Henry of Winchester."

"And wherefore?"

"Nay, I know not; nor does he, perhaps, himself, now. He lives in an imaginary world, and fancies himself the greatest champion in Christendom. I believe he was a good lance in his youth, and, after taking part in some of the disturbances during King Henry's minority, was fain to go to the East."

"It is quite like my father's youth," remarked I.

"Yes," said Fitz-John; "they were both involved in the plot for which Constantine Fitz-Anulph was hanged, and, I think, went to Syria in company."

I was about to make further inquiries, when, at that moment, Fitz-John halted.

"We are now," said he, "within twelve miles of London; this being High Barnet, and yon the church with the embattled tower built by the Abbot of St. Albans, and dedicated to the Evangelist. Here I was to have been met by a messenger with instructions for my guidance; and, speak of the devil, says the proverb, and he will appear. It is," he added, "an old friend in a new character—Stephen Fitz-Scrob—the most reckless desperado in Oxford, now a sober citizen, having exchanged the gown for the gaberdine, enlisted in De Montfort's ranks, and dedicated himself to the cause of truth and righteousness."

As Fitz-John spoke, Stephen Fitz-Scrob, in the guise of a citizen, rode forward, and seemed as sober and staid as he had in other days appeared reckless. I had no doubt, however, that his new character was merely assumed, as the former had been, and that he was as likely to brawl, and riot, and plunder in the citizen's gaberdine as he had been in the scholar's gown. He was evidently, however, of consideration in the eyes of my baronial companion, who appeared all eagerness for the tidings he brought.

"Well, my friend—good friend—what news bringest thou?" demanded Fitz-John, eagerly.

"All is as it should be, my noble patron," answered Stephen Fitz-Scrob. "London is boiling with excitement; and the Londoners are more than ever enraged against the king, against the queen, against the King of the Romans, and against the Jews who followed the queen from Provence, and who have since ministered to the avarice of the King of the Romans."

"But what has exasperated them against the king?" asked Fitz-John.

"Why, simply this, that a squire of William Valence, Earl of Pembroke, being in the city the other day, drew his dagger, swore he would dip it in the blood of the citizens, and wounded several of them, trusting to his lord's protection. The king is held answerable for this outrage, and the cry against him is strong."

"And what of the queen?"

"Doubtless, it is the old sore about queen-gold and the Queen-hithe; but, be that as it may, there is one rumour that it is wholly on account of her influence that the king is against maintaining the Provisions of Oxford; and another, that she is a witch, that she has dealings with sorceresses, and that she has, by their means, put to death a damsel named Rosamond, of whom the king was violently enamoured."

"Those who propagated that last rumour might, at least, have devised a new fable; that shows poverty of invention. But let it pass. What of the King of the Romans?"

"In bad odour, as well as his son; because, after having gone so far with the barons, they have both deserted the good cause, and taken the king's side."

"And what of the Jews?" asked Fitz-John. "What of the unbelieving dogs? What of the bloodsuckers and usurers?"

"A Jew," answered Fitz-Scrob, "has been accused of extorting more than a legal interest from a Christian; and, since that event, a quarrel having taken place on the subject between a Jew and a Christian, at the corner of the Old Jewry, the Jew, after dangerously wounding the Christian, endeavoured to escape. But the multitude, pursuing him to his own house, killed him, and are all eagerness to fall upon his brethren."

"And so," said Fitz-John, "London is in a ferment?"

"Such a ferment, as men tell me, has never been since Constantine Fitz-Anulph spoiled so good a plot that Walter Merley and Rufus

Ribaut both declared that if he had not been hanged he should not have escaped their daggers. But there shall be no bungling this time."

"Ha!" said Fitz-John, thoughtfully. "And now a more important question. What of De Montfort?"

"The great earl," answered Fitz-Scrob, "is still on the French coast; but, ere many hours pass, a trusty messenger, in the person of Oscar the Scot, will reach you with his latest intentions. But he requests you not to enter London till you hear from him; and therefore let me entreat you to await his messenger under the roof of that leal man and excellent host who is known to my Lord Fitz-John as keeping the hostelry called the White Horse, and who goes by the name of Dick Tykering."

"And do you wait also?" asked Fitz-John, who seemed rather alarmed at the probability of being saddled with Fitz-Scrob's company.

"Nay, nay," answered Fitz-Scrob, with a knowing shake of the head. "I must back to London, keep up the excitement, and take care that the Batchellors flag not in their efforts in favour of the White Cross and in the cause of truth and righteousness. And so, noble baron, adieu! May God and the patron saint of your noble house have you ever in keeping!" And, with a humble obeisance, he turned his horse's head, and rode towards the capital.

"You see how our cause prospers," said Fitz-John. "It is not yet too late to take back your refusal and to join us."

"Pardon me," said I; "I must have a cause that needs not the aid of such agents or of such devices."

"By my faith! I sometimes do sicken at this work," said Fitz-John; "but the end will justify the means." And, as if anxious to drop the subject, he touched his horse with the spur, and made him demivolte.

A few minutes' riding brought us to the White Horse, the hostelry kept by Dick Tykering, who hung out his sign as a welcome to all comers. It was a house of two stories, and of good aspect, much frequented by travellers to and from the north, constructed of wood, with one story projecting over the other, and having its lintels and door-posts decorated with strange carving.

"It seems," said Fitz-John, "that this was a hunting-lodge of the Abbot of St. Albans, but the present abbot does not hunt."

"I hear he is a dealer in Yarmouth herring," said I, with a sneer.

The host was from home—gone to London, as his spouse informed us, to consult lawyers about a quarrel which then ran high between the Abbot of St. Albans and the inhabitants, about the right of the former to inclose the common. But in his absence we were hospitably received; and having been conducted to one of the upper chambers, where preparations had been made for our entertainment, we had the satisfaction of finding, to our comfortable experience, that, in so far as entertainment was concerned, Stephen Fitz-Scrob had not exaggerated Dick Tykering's good qualities as a host. Our enjoyment, however, was destined to be suddenly and disagreeably interrupted.



St Albans Abbey



Runnymede.

## XVI.

## A SURPRISE AFTER SUPPER.

"I CANNOT but marvel, my gallant friend," said John Fitz-John, as, seated in the White Horse, we seasoned our conversation with the Malvoisie and Bordeaux wine—"I cannot but marvel much that, being as you are a Norman gentleman, you should be all eagerness to fight for Henry's crown, instead of casting in your lot with those whose ancestors stood side by side with your own on the field of Hastings and under the oak-tree at Runnymede."

"You forget," said I, "that I am Saxon on the female side, and that I was reared by a grandmother whose sympathies with the vanquished race were peculiarly strong."

"Even in that case," continued Fitz-John, "I see not how you justify yourself. Henry is not the king to make England what it ought to be, and his queen cares no more for Englishmen than for

the denizens of Fairyland ; and yet beshrew me if Henry of Winchester and Eleanor of Provence have not deemed themselves privileged to flout the barons of England in a way that William the Norman and Matilda of Flanders never dared even to think of doing."

"I am not much concerned," replied I, "about the barons of England, who, doubtless, can take very good care of themselves ; my concern is with the nation ; and, for my part, it contents me to believe that Henry loves the people, and is anxious to raise them from their depression."

"Henry loves the people! you say ; perhaps he does," added Fitz-John. "It was the rabble he tried to raise against us when he published the proclamation in which he assured the commons of his readiness to protect them against the great lords. It was the rabble, also, whose affections he endeavoured to secure, when he revived the custom of calling folknotes, to remind the populace of London that they had a political existence as well as the rich citizens."

"It was a good old Saxon custom," said I ; "and albeit the king, in doing what he did, showed more zeal than knowledge, yet a prince of earnestness, high intellect, and great energy might soon find a way of teaching the nation to govern itself, and of compelling the most potent baron to obey the laws of the realm as passively as the humblest peasant. I, at all events, am for crown and people, and I should not wonder if you and I live long enough to see their cause triumphant."

"And where," asked Fitz-John, with a sneer—"where are you to find this mighty prince who has vigour and enthusiasm enough to make royalty and the rabble victorious over barons of great name and citizens of great wealth?"

"I would fain hope he is not far to seek. Men speak highly of

the prince's capacity and courage. I confess that great is my confidence in Prince Edward."

"Well," said Fitz-John, "I share not your confidence, and much am I mistaken if in this, at least, I err, that if England is to be regenerated it must be by Simon de Montfort."

"I am aware," said I, "that De Montfort is a man of deep reach and policy, yet I feel not the less strongly that if England is to be regenerated Edward is the man. He is an Englishman, and he has an English heart."

"Edward is brave, doubtless, and not ungenerous," said Fitz-John, musingly; "yet I trust him not. But one thing as to the future seems certain, and that is, that you and I are sure to draw our swords on different sides."

"And wherefore not?" asked I. "Is it not the duty of a brave man, who would stand well with God and his own conscience, to take that side on which he holds truth and justice to be?"

"Well," said Fitz-John, "I would you had been of our determination; but since it is not so, let us at least be generous foes, and for the sake of old acquaintance, let us bargain that in the event of our outliving the coming conflict, he whose party conquers in the strife shall protect the other, and aid him to the utmost of his power to win the demoiselle he loves best."

"Agreed," said I; "but methinks the bargain is somewhat unequal. John Fitz-John is a powerful baron, and deep in De Montfort's confidence; Ralph Merley a poor squire, of whose very existence Prince Edward is unaware; though I would rather fight under him than any prince who ever reigned in England, had I but the opportunity."

"Be under no alarm on that point," said Fitz-John; "you will have opportunity enough."



"Think you so in truth?"

"It is certain that three months cannot elapse before an appeal is made to the god of battles; and then he who has the longest sword, and the strongest arm, and the readiest wit, will be the most welcome adherent on either side."

As we thus conversed hours sped on, and we were still seated at the board, indulging in wine and talk, when the sun setting gloriously recalled Fitz-John's memory to the purpose for which he was there. Immediately the young baron began to fret about the non-appearance of Oscar the Scot, and to express impatience at the non-arrival of that trusty individual.

"Were I engaged in important state affairs," said I, in answer to one of his murmurs of impatience, "I should find better instruments with which to work than Stephen Fitz-Scrob and his worthy Achates, Oscar the Scot."

"I have faith in Fitz-Scrob," replied Fitz-John; "and as for the Scot, Stephen holds his heart in the hollow of his hand."

"I suppose," said I, with a sneer, "that Fitz-Scrob descends from the varlet of that name who was allowed to remain in England in the Confessor's time, and who showed his sense of gratitude by acting as a spy for William the Norman, and that is enough for a Norman baron."

"Nay," said Fitz-John, laughing, "my prejudices run not to such a length, and, to tell the truth, I mistrust Fitz-Scrob's intimacy with Dick Tykering. I would you saw mine host. He is not what he seems. I sometimes suspect him of being an arrant Royalist, and dislike the trouble he is giving, about fencing common lands, to the Abbot of St. Albans, who is a close friend of De Montfort, and a man who, in his life, rivals the apostles themselves, with reverence be it spoken."

"I have heard," replied I, raising the wine-cup to my lips, "that my Lord Abbot is a plotter for De Montfort ; and as for his life rivalling that of the apostles, I believe there is one point of resemblance—if not a fisher of men, it is certain he is a vendor of Yarmouth herrings."

"A truce to irreverence," said Fitz-John, seriously. "I would, though, that this Scot were come. I hope nothing has gone wrong with De Montfort and the good cause."

"What if that mad knight's words proved true?" I suggested. "What if, instead of your Scottish carrier-pigeon, De Montfort should appear in person?"

"In truth," said Fitz-John, smiling, "I hardly think the great earl would mend our good cheer. Besides, I should fear a quarrel. When flint meets steel, fire flies. I observe in thee a spirit of defiance which no fear of consequences would restrain, and De Montfort brooks not contradiction from——"

"From an inferior, you would say," I suggested, as the young baron hesitated. "But, John Fitz-John," added I, as my grandmother's pride and the wine I had quaffed heated my blood, "I have not yet learned to regard myself in that light towards Simon de Montfort. Saving his earldom, which he owes to a king whose throne he now wishes to usurp, I hold myself a better man than the adventurer who betrays a too-confiding friend and turns against a too-generous benefactor."

The brow of Fitz-John grew stern. He bit his lip, and, I believe, was about to make one of those angry replies that terminate truces even more important than ours was, when at that instant a heavy step sounded in the gallery, the door was thrown open, and a man of tall stature, wrapped in a horseman's cloak, entered.

"John Fitz-John," said he, throwing aside his cloak, "I greet thee in the name of God and the good St. James."

"My lord of Leicester," said the young baron, not without some confusion, "this is, in truth, a surprise."

I looked at the new-comer with curiosity, not wholly unmingled with awe ; and, as he turned round, our glances met, with an instinctive prescience on my part, at least, that we were one day to meet in some narrow path of human life from which both could not escape. And if I had never afterwards seen the man, I should never have forgotten that haughty countenance, with the elevated eyebrows, the proud eye, the nostrils breathing fire, the dark brow which told of thoughtful days and sleepless nights, the mouth which seemed to express scorn for all who might question his pretensions to authority or dream of throwing obstacles in his way. Even if Fitz-John had not spoken, I should have instinctively recognised the personage with whom I thus suddenly found myself face to face.

It was Simon de Montfort.





Bordeaux

## XVII.

## SIMON DE MONTFORT.

**I**T is a somewhat difficult matter to comprehend how a man who was a stranger and foreigner among Englishmen should have acquired the influence which the Earl of Leicester exercised in England during the last few years of his eventful life. Nor, indeed, would it be easy, even for those who pretend to regard him as hero and saint, to explain the circumstance, without arriving at conclusions not highly favourable to his character for sincerity and good faith. It is certain that, so skilfully had the game of ambition been played, however, that when Henry endeavoured to levy taxes with the object of placing the crown of Sicily on the head of his second son, Edmund of Lancaster, and when De Montfort seized the occa-

sion to make a grasp at the reins of government, the king arrayed against himself the feeling of nearly the whole nation, and that the earl ranged nearly all the discontented on his side, no matter how widely they differed from him—which was nothing—and from each other—which was much—in their political views and sentiments.

Simon de Montfort was descended, in the male line, from an illegitimate son of one of the kings of France, and in the female line from an heiress of the Fitz-Parnells, Earls of Leicester, and through the Fitz-Parnells from William Fitz-Osborne, Lord of Breteuil in Normandy, and Earl of Hereford in England, and celebrated in chronicles as the friend and brother-in-arms of William the Norman. His father was that Count de Montfort who spent some part of his youth in England in the reign of King John, and who, subsequently taking part with Philip Augustus, and returning to France, figured conspicuously in the wars with the Albigenses, and fell, mortally wounded by a stone from a sling, while besieging Toulouse.

When the Count de Montfort breathed his last, Almeric, his eldest son, inherited his continental possessions, and Simon, as a younger son, was dependent on the course of events and the chapter of accidents. The idea of mending his fortune by matrimony naturally enough presented itself to his mind, and, bent on female conquests, he cast his eyes longingly on Jean, Countess of Flanders, who was then a widow. It does not appear that the bereaved countess was particularly coy. But Blanche of Castile, who ruled the French during the minority of her son, King Louis, evinced much aversion to the match, and threw such obstacles in the way that Simon, after using language that exposed him to danger, fled from France in a towering rage, and came to try his fortune at the court of England.

It seems that by the extinction of the Fitz-Parnells, Almeric de Montfort became heir to the earldom of Leicester, and that Simon

had obtained from his elder brother a cession of all his rights. No objection was made to his claim. Indeed, he met from King Henry with a gracious reception. On the occasion of Queen Eleanor's coronation in Westminster Hall, he was allowed to appear as Lord High Steward, and in that capacity he held the golden basin in which the royal bride dipped her hands after the banquet.

While hanging about the court of Westminster—at one time regaling his fancy with ambitious dreams, at another exercising his ingenuity to discover some mode of paying the debts he owed to Jews—Simon, having got over his disappointment in failing with the Countess of Flanders, bethought him of Eleanor, youngest of three daughters of King John and Isabel of Angoulême, and widow of William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, son of the great earl who governed England in Henry's boyhood. Indeed, she was rather a tempting prize, being young, and beautiful, and rich. But there was one obstacle which appeared insuperable. In presence of St. Edmund, Eleanor had, after her husband's death, vowed to take the habit of a religious, and that ceremony was deemed sufficient to preclude her from dreaming of a second husband. Thrown into Montfort's company, the Countess of Pembroke began to think lightly of her vow, and finally indulged her passion for him to such an extent that a marriage appeared necessary to save her reputation.

But however that may have been, De Montfort and the countess resolved to run all risks ; and Henry's consent having been obtained, they were privately married at the Chapel Royal, St. Stephen's, the king's chaplain performing the ceremony, and the king giving away the bride. For a time the affair was kept a profound secret : the lady was still known at court as Countess of Pembroke, and no suspicion was entertained of a marriage having taken place.

Ere long, however, the secret oozed out ; and not only the clergy,

but the barons of England, headed by Richard of Cornwall, expressed loud indignation. At first, indeed, it appeared that Henry's throne would hardly stand the shock. But Hubert de Burgh, now an old man, stood firmly by the king, and through the mediation of the papal legate matters were accommodated. De Montfort having humbled himself, and Richard of Cornwall having given his new brother-in-law the kiss of peace, the barons retired in discontent to their castles, and abused Montfort as the most unscrupulous of foreigners, and Richard as the most irresolute of politicians.

Indeed, De Montfort having sinned against the laws of the Church, and incurred the enmity of the barons, found his position the very reverse of comfortable. With all his faults and failings, however, he was not a man to shrink from the peril he had defied. Determining to leave the countess, who was about to become a mother, at the Castle of Kenilworth, and to go forthwith to Rome to obtain a dispensation from the pope, he raised a large sum by obtaining money from every quarter he could—extorting as much as five hundred marks from Simon de Curlevache, one of the citizens of Leicester. Seizing on a ship, he set sail by stealth, and, having visited the court of Germany, persuaded the Emperor Frederick, who had espoused his wife's sister, to give him letters to the pope. On reaching Rome, he contrived, by gifts and promises, to carry his point ; and, having given King Henry's name as security for payment, he returned with epistles to the legate, in which that functionary was ordered to grant a special decree in De Montfort's favour.

The conduct of the pope was much blamed by the clergy of England, who could not foresee that De Montfort would one day turn saint to please them. However, he returned elate with his success, and meeting from the king with as friendly a reception as he could have desired, repaired to Kenilworth to announce to the

countess that the difficulty was at an end. However, he seems to have felt that he was unpopular, and for some time led a retired life at his wife's castles of Odiham and Kenilworth.

It was the birth of Prince Edward in June, 1239, that brought De Montfort and his spouse again into public. On that occasion De Montfort was one of the nobles who figured as godfather, and the countess appeared at court for the first time since her disgrace. At that date the king and De Montfort were on the best terms. But clouds were gathering, and ere long a storm was to burst on the earl's head.

It was the 9th of August, 1239, and Queen Eleanor was that day to be churched. Several noble ladies came to accompany her, and amongst others appeared the Countess of Leicester, attended by her husband. But meanwhile Henry had learned that De Montfort had, without his consent, named him as his security with the pope; and no sooner did the earl present himself than the king broke out into a rage.

"Sir," exclaimed Henry, frowning, "you are an excommunicated man, and I forbid you, as well as your wife, to be present at this solemnity."

Amazed, and much alarmed, De Montfort and his countess left Westminster, and embarking on the river, hastened to the palace of the Bishop of Winchester, which the king had granted them as a residence. But there they were not allowed to remain; and, finding themselves ejected, they returned to Westminster in hopes of appeasing the king's wrath.

"We have come back humbly to intreat your majesty's pardon," said De Montfort, and, as he spoke the countess, by her tears and lamentations, endeavoured to soften the king's heart.

"I cannot listen to you," cried Henry, addressing De Montfort,



almost fiercely. "You seduced my sister before marriage ; and when I found it out, I gave her to you in order to avoid scandal, and that her vow might not impede the marriage, you went to Rome, and by costly presents and great promises you bribed the Roman court to grant you permission to do what was unlawful ; and, on your failing to pay the money, you were excommunicated, and, to increase the mass of your wickedness, you, by false evidence, named me as your security, without consulting me, and when I knew nothing at all about the matter."

On hearing the king's accusation, De Montfort was overcome with shame ; and, determining to leave the country, he, in the evening, embarked with the countess in a small and frail vessel lying in the Thames, and in a mood the reverse of serene set sail from England.

For some time after this De Montfort remained in France. On the 1st of April, 1240, however, he again set foot on English ground. Meanwhile he had vowed to atone for the irregularity of his marriage by undertaking a pilgrimage to Jerusalem ; and, having raised about a thousand pounds by alienating lands and cutting down timber, which he sold to the Hospitallers of Leicester, he prepared to depart.

At times Henry and De Montfort seemed to have made up their quarrel. But between such men no real sympathy could exist, and the king, to get the earl out of his way, nominated him to the government of Gascony. For several years De Montfort ruled Gascony with ability and vigour. But his rigour gave umbrage to the inhabitants, and at length, seeing that their complaints, however loud and continuous, were unavailing, they sent to England a deputation, headed by the Archbishop of Bordeaux. At the same time De Montfort appeared in England to answer their charges, and a conference was held.

On that occasion the king, who was present, took part with the Gascons.

"King !" cried De Montfort, "you are deserting me."

"No, traitor !" said the king.

"You lie !" exclaimed De Montfort, highly incensed ; "and, but for your place and dignity, it should be an evil hour for you in which you uttered such a word as traitor."

No one can marvel after such a scene as this, and after occurrences which went far to prove De Montfort's plots with Llewellyn of Wales, and other enemies of England, that the king, as time passed on, should have indicated, in a manner not to be mistaken, that he suspected his brother-in-law of being bent on mischief.

One day, when Henry had embarked in his barge to recreate himself with a sail on the Thames, a violent thunder-storm made him anxious to land, and he was set on shore at the house of the Bishop of Durham, near the Strand. De Montfort, who happened at the time to be with the bishop at Durham House, no sooner saw the royal barge approach the stairs than he went out to meet the king.

"There is nothing to fear, my lord," said he ; "the storm is passing over."

"Montfort," replied the king, annoyed perhaps at meeting a man whose company he so little relished, "whatever I may fear from thunder and lightning, I fear you more than all the thunder and lightning in the world."

"It is strange and most unjust," exclaimed De Montfort, "that you should fear me, your real friend, who have been always faithful to you and yours. Much rather should you fear the flatterers, who are your greatest enemies—in fact, your destroyers."

When that assembly known as the "Mad Parliament" was held

at Oxford, De Montfort appeared prominently among the enemies of the king, and exhibited a degree of violence unbecoming a gentleman and unworthy of a statesman. In truth, he seemed bent on showing the barons what lengths he was prepared to go, and in his wranglings with the Royalists set dignity and discretion utterly at defiance.

At that time Richard Earl of Cornwall, having been elected King of the Romans, was on the Continent endeavouring to possess himself of the imperial crown of Germany. Richard's son, Henry of Cornwall, however, was at Oxford, and on being asked to take the oath to the Provisions, he naturally hesitated.

"I will on no account," said Henry of Cornwall, "take such an oath without my father's advice and permission."

"By St. James's arm!" cried De Montfort, "if your father himself does not take the oath he shall not keep possession of a foot of land in England."

It happened that among the Provisions was one for the surrender of all the king's castles into the hands of the twenty-four barons; and to this William de Valence, earl of Pembroke, and the other half-brothers of the king, offered a determined opposition.

"By the death of Christ!" said Valence, "we will never give up the castles which our brother the king has freely granted us."

"You may rest assured," said De Montfort, "that you will either give up the castles which you hold from the king, or you will undoubtedly lose your heads."

De Montfort's ambition was strong, and his affairs were not prosperous. He was kept down and embarrassed with heavy debts, and he could expect no favour from the king. Besides, Henry was in difficulty, and, as De Montfort well knew, might ere long be in danger. It was quite clear, under the circumstances, that other

parties were likely to prove much more profitable allies ; and he set himself without scruple to insinuate himself into the good graces of the intolerant Church, the overbearing aristocracy, and the discontented and credulous democracy. He perceived that by affecting saintliness and sympathizing with the complaints of the clergy he might gain the favour of the Church ; that by turning against the queen and the court he might gain the favour of the Anglo-Norman barons ; and that by playing upon the prejudices and pandering to the passions of the multitude he might enlist the democracy on his side. With these objects, and perhaps as time passed on convincing himself that he was sincere, De Montfort, while his countess acknowledged Adam de Morisco as her confidential adviser and spiritual guide, cultivated the close friendship of Robert, Bishop of Lincoln, insinuated himself into the good graces of Richard de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, the foremost of England's barons, and by affecting much antipathy to Poitevins and Provençals, and prodigious zeal for the laws and liberties of England, endeavoured to make the populace forget he was a foreigner, and to delude them into the belief that he was a patriot.

It was a deep game, and so well played that it conducted De Montfort to the steps of a throne, and might have won him a crown, if, in his last struggle, he had not encountered at Evesham an adversary whose head was far clearer and whose right arm was far stronger than his own.





The Stripling and Simon de Montfort.

# XVIII.

## FLINT MEETS STEEL, AND FIRE FLIES.

**I**T was not without some slight degree of trepidation that I suddenly found myself in the presence of a man who had oppressed provinces and bearded princes, who had fooled a selfish clergy and

a fierce democracy, who had the reputation of "moulding the barons with his own deep-cut impressions, especially the younger ones," of whom it was said that "they were but as wax in his hands."

Nevertheless, I was not, for a moment, really daunted ; and, if I had been, one thought of the lessons I had learned from my grandmother, who hated the great Simon de Montfort with a perfect hatred, would have restored my self-respect and dignity. It seemed to me, indeed, that John Fitz-John, that powerful baron, with his castles and manors, was infinitely more disconcerted than I, Ralph Merley, an humble squire whose property was in his sword, could possibly have been, and that he almost quivered as De Montfort directed his penetrating glance towards the spot which I occupied, with my wine-cup in my hand.

Indeed, I should say that my countenance rather expressed to De Montfort the aversion which I felt in my heart, if I, who never felt more loyally disposed towards the wearer of the Confessor's crown than at that moment, may judge from De Montfort's look as he turned abruptly for an explanation to the young Norman baron.

"John Fitz-John," asked he, "who is this youth?"

"This," answered Fitz-John, "is the son of Walter Merley, a brave champion of the Cross, of whom, doubtless, my lord of Leicester has heard."

"I remember the man," said De Montfort, who evidently considered my parentage no recommendation. "But is the youth of our determination? Is he one who will die for truth and righteousness?"

"He is rather inclined otherwise," answered Fitz-John ; "but the son of such a man as Walter Merley can only take one side when

he knows how the nobles of England are excluded from the king's favour, and how England is devoured by such locusts as Poitevins and Provençals, and Savoyards and Spaniards."

"What hast thou to say for thyself?" asked De Montfort, regarding me with an air of superiority, which I deemed so offensive that, even if I had before thought of him with respect, I should, from that moment, have been his enemy.

"I relish no such questioning," I replied, briefly, and relapsing into silence played with my wine-cup.

"Answer me, youth!" said De Montfort, with a flashing eye and in a blustering voice. "I command thee to speak!"

I felt my anger rise and my whole frame fired by wine and the spirit of defiance with which my grandmother had from childhood inspired me; and my pride as scholar coming to the aid of that which I cherished as gentleman, I rose, and tossed back my head with a lofty disdain to which De Montfort was little accustomed.

"My lord of Leicester," I said, elevating my voice in spite of his frown—for, boy though I was, I had been too well trained to quail even before the frown of De Montfort—"I am an Englishman, though born in a land beyond the sea, and my tongue is mine own; but, since you press me, and will have my opinion, I say frankly that I cannot pretend to have any pleasure in hearing of Poitevins and Provençals devouring England. Nay, more, I say this, and I care not who hears me," I added, raising my voice so that it could be heard by all within the walls of the hostelry, "that I should gladly see all foreigners ordered by the king to depart the kingdom. But, of all foreigners, I, as Anglo-Norman gentleman, most thoroughly detest Franks; and I must add, that I make no exception in favour of the Earl of Leicester."

"By the arm of St. James!" exclaimed De Montfort, whose face,

as I spoke, had expressed the utmost surprise, "never have I met man or boy who dared to speak to me in terms so malapert."

"And who are you, Simon De Montfort?" I asked, with a withering sneer—"who are you, that I should fear to speak to you as man to man? A foreign adventurer, who came to England homeless and desperate, on whom King Henry bestowed the highest favour, and who now realizes the truth of the fable of the snake which the husbandman found in the field, which he carried home and laid before the fire, and which no sooner recovered animation than it stood up and hissed at its benefactor."

"Dog! darest thou to beard me thus?" exclaimed De Montfort, furiously. "This to me!" he added, as his mouth writhed, and he laid his hand on his dagger.

I was never less afraid in my life than when I looked Lord Leicester full in the face, and placed my hand on my sword.

"Hand to hand, and foot to foot," said I, significantly, "and he whose steel encounters that of the son of Walter Merley shall never say that his adversary shrank from a combat."

As I spoke, De Montfort appeared astonished at my juvenile audacity. Rapidly, indeed, his amazement got the better of his anger; and, with the manner peculiar to men who brook neither difference of opinion, nor contradiction, nor equality, save from those to whom they are servile as a matter of policy, he walked to the door, raised his hand, and made a signal which brought to his side several men-at-arms ready to obey his behest.

"Take that urchin," he said, pointing to me, "and hang him on the nearest tree."

"By the Holy Rood!" exclaimed I, my indignation completely overcoming my fear, "you are a great earl, and I am a poor squire; but I would not exchange tempers with you to call myself lord of



all the baronies that the house of De Montfort ever possessed. That, however, is nothing to the present purpose. But I say, Beware! It is true that you may hang me on the nearest tree, as you have given orders for doing; but again I say, Beware! I have kinsmen who will not allow a hair of my head to fall unlawfully without inflicting a fearful vengeance."

"Fool!" cried De Montfort, furiously, "prate not to me of thy kinsmen."

"Beware, Simon de Montfort!" I repeated, sternly, for, knowing the kind of man, I felt that my case was now desperate. "He who wrongs the grandson of Juliana de Merley bids defiance to the White Lion of March; and earls are not impotent, though they have not betrayed their benefactors, nor borrowed money from Jews, nor extorted gold from citizens."

"In truth, my lord of Leicester," said John Fitz-John, interrupting, "it were well to pause."

And, taking De Montfort aside, he held a brief conversation, during which the great earl exhibited much dismay and consternation. I perfectly understood what it was, though they had spoken in a whisper, and was in no degree surprised when De Montfort returned with an air less haughty.

"Young gentleman," said he, almost in an apologetic tone, "it is unfortunate that accident has made you acquainted with the fact of my being in England. As for your boyish indiscretion, I overlook that in consideration for your youth—for doth not Solomon tell us not to answer a fool according to his folly? But take care, for thine own sake, what next happens. Tempt not the dragon's teeth, for, by the arm of St. James, they bite hard."

"I fear them not!" said I, scornfully.

"It is necessary, however, under the circumstances," said De

Montfort, apparently astonished at my reckless hardihood, "that you should not leave this house till the third day. I ask you not to surrender your sword ; but you will save all awkwardness by accompanying these men, who will see to your accommodation."

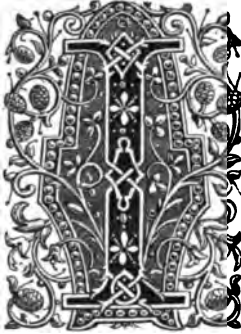
Not much relishing the idea of being kept in durance at a rustic hostelry to suit the convenience of Simon de Montfort and a few barons, with whose politics I did not in the least sympathize and to whose ambition I had no wish to contribute, I was on the point of uttering a most indignant protest against my detention. At that instant, however, a man put his head inside the door, and held up a finger, as if to warn me to be silent for my life. I felt certain that I recognised the face—that it had been familiar to me in childhood, and that it was associated with pleasant recollections—and checked the angry protest that had risen to my lips, and, with a bow to the great earl, which was much haughtier than he relished, and one half-contemptuous to Fitz-John, I left the room with my guards, not without an instinctive suspicion—too well founded—that they were intended to be my gaolers.

"Well," soliloquised I, "at all events I have got off with life, and De Montfort has made another mortal enemy ; and so long as I live never will I despair of paying him off with interest for his kind intention of sending me to be hanged on the nearest tree."



## XIX.

## MY ESCAPE.



T is not wonderful that I was not in the most charitable mood with the baronial part of mankind in general, nor with Simon, Earl of Leicester, in particular, as the men-at-arms conducted me through a gallery to a small room of the White Horse hostelry, and, drawing bolt and bar behind, left me to sober myself by reflecting in solitude.

Indeed, I gave way to a burst of rage, kicked the door, uttered cries of defiance, and indulged in threats of vengeance. My rage was excessive. I would at that moment, had it been in my power, have torn the Provisions of Oxford to shreds—cantonised the twenty-four barons as they had cantonised the kingdom, and sent De Montfort to be drawn by wild horses, as a punishment for his presumption towards a Merley who was Dame Juliana's grandson. Assuredly, that night, the king, notwithstanding his somewhat ungracious treatment of me in the northern forest, had no more enthusiastic adherent than I in his realm.

As hours passed over, however, I recognised the absurdity of kicking against the pricks, and, gradually resigning myself to my fate, resolved rather to wait the course of events than make matters worse by attempting further violence. I therefore stretched myself to rest, and, laying my sword by my side, began to ruminate on the events of the day. I confess I did think that, considering the under-

standing on which we had ridden southward in company, John Fitz-John had deserted me a little too easily. But, seeing the enormous influence which De Montfort exercised over the young baron, I was not disposed to take a harsh view of his conduct. Nor did I entertain any high expectations of being freed by his interference from my present incarceration, as I hardly regarded him as being, when in De Montfort's company, quite a free agent. If I did entertain hopes of relief, I derived them from the circumstance of having seen that well-known face which appeared when the quarrel was still hot, and from the sign then made to me not to drive matters to extremity. In the midst of my reflections I fell asleep, and possibly, on awaking, might have schooled myself into a philosophic appreciation of my position—but I was not to have the opportunity.

It was, if I remember aright, a little after daybreak, when I was aroused from slumber by the pressure of a hand on my arm. I sprang up with a bound, and looked for my sword. It was gone, however ; and I was preparing to rush upon the intruder, supposing he had come with no friendly intentions, when I recognised the same face the sight of which had conveyed hope to me on the previous day.

"Softly, my Lord Ralph," said the man, with a burr which there was no mistaking ; "I removed the sword before rousing thee, knowing well how hasty a Merley is in handling his weapon. But dost thou not know me ?"

"I think I do," answered I, somewhat surprised. "If I err not, you are Gamel Goodrick, whom my grandmother used to call Gamel, son of Ulph."

"Then follow me gently," said he ; "I will show thee the way to safety."

"Where," asked I, "is Simon de Montfort ?—where the Lord Fitz-John ?"

"Both rode off after nightfall," answered Gamel; "De Montfort for Oxford, Fitz-John for London, and De Montfort's men-at-arms drank enough of strong drink after midnight to make them sleep till noonday. But tread softly; for black would be the hour in which they found me abetting thine escape."

Without further words, my old acquaintance led me through the door, along the gallery, and, passing out at the rear of the house, into an orchard.

"Now," said he, "our words are not likely to reach De Montfort's men-at-arms. Put what questions thou wilt, and I'll answer any in reason."

"I want to know, in the first place, why you never returned to Linden?"

"Because I durst not. Dame Juliana charged me not to come back without getting the secret out of the mad knight; and I could not, though I did my best, which is all a man can do."

"Perhaps," said I, "it is not yet too late. I saw Sir Rufus Ribaut but yesterday."

"So did I," said the other. "He was here for hours, and I rode part of the way with him towards London. But he is as cunning as the fiend—more knave than fool, or I'm much mistaken. Beware of him, for he hates your name as death!"

"And where," asked I, "have you been since you left Linden? It is years ago."

"Why, you see," said he, "I followed the knight to this place, and here he contrived to give me the slip; and it chanced about that time that old Dick Tykering, who kept the White Horse like his father afore him, died, and that his daughter felt lonely; so hearing, some time after, that Dame Juliana had gone from the troubles of this world to her long home, and thinking that I could not do better

than hang up my cap and draw in my stool and sit down under the sign of the White Horse, I e'en took her to wife, turned host, and got known as Dick Tykering, as she wanted to keep up the old name."

"Verily," said I, "it seems to me that fortune's been on your side—that you've fallen on your feet—and that your lines have fallen in a pleasant place."

"Good enough for the likes o' me, doubtless," said Gamel Goodrick; "no fairer spot in England. In truth, they have a proverb that he who buys a house in Hertfordshire pays two years' purchase for the air; and yet anon my heart often travels back to my native North, for, as says the song—

"Oh, the oak, the ash, and the bonny ivy tree,  
They flourish best at home, in the north country."

"Nevertheless," said I, "I think you've been lucky, all things considered; for, judging by appearances, I should say your house is a flourishing one."

"My luck has na been that bad," said Gamel. "But what wonder? Have I not a long northern head, Lord Ralph, and much mother wit? and, as I often told Master Robert (whom God forgive for his cruelty to you!) a pound of mother wit is worth a bushel of book lore."

"I like a combination of both, good Gamel," said I. "But it is no time for further palaver. I relish not De Montfort's courtesy, and I want to escape. Wherefore bring me my horse, and let me be off; and tell them, when I am missed, that the devil has flown off with me, or any story that suits your purpose."

"Leave me to tell my own story," said Gamel, with a grin. "As for your horse, he stands outside the orchard, saddled and bridled, and here is my wife's little nephew, the boy Dickon, to guide thee.

He has your sword and the wherewithal to break your fast ; and, lest thou shouldst be pursued, he will lurk with thee in the chase all day, and in the evening lead thee to secure quarters with John Gizors, armourer in the Poultry, or with Walter the Farrier, who, by royal licence, keeps the Forge in the Strand, in the pariah of St. Clement Danes. John married the eldest of three sisters, Walter the next, and I the youngest ; and both the men and their wives will make thee welcome for my sake, and for thine own too, for thou hast a countenance which thou mightest show anywhere."

"One word before I mount," said I. "Since I find my Lord Fitz-John meeting Earl Simon de Montfort here, and that messages are carried between them by a bird of such evil omen as Stephen Fitz-Scrob, whose discreditable character I remember when he pretended to be one of the scholars at Oxford, I warn you of the danger of letting your house be made the scene of conspiracies."

"Thank thee," said Gamel, drily ; "we need speak no further on that point. But trust me," he continued—"trust me, I'm too far north to be led too far either by lord or earl. As for the poor fool Fitz-Scrob, he is nothing in my hands—no more than a plaything in the hands of a child."

"I will wager that you are a king's man, after all?" said I, temptingly.

"Nay, Lord Ralph, I say nothing on that head. I promised to answer any questions in reason ; but that is not a reasonable question, as times go."

I perceived that nothing as to his political opinions was to be got out of my old acquaintance, communicative as he was as to his private affairs. I therefore intimated my wish to be off without delay, and he conducted me to where, held by his wife's nephew, Harfagher stood impatiently pawing the ground outside the orchard. I took

my sword from the boy Dickon, and, having wished my old acquaintance all prosperity in his new occupation, I ordered my young guide to proceed on the way, and rode into the wood that extends for miles between the "White Horse" hostelry and the capital of England. All day we remained in the chase, and I had leisure to render myself, in some degree, familiar with the locality, little foreseeing the use I should make of the knowledge within a few months. But I desire not to anticipate the terrible scene in which I was to be so prominent an actor. Suffice it to say, that at the close of day we ventured to bring the journey to an end, and that, soon after the parson of St. Martin's-le-Grand had rung out his curfew bell, I approached the abode of Walter the Farrier.

The house occupied by Walter the Farrier was somewhat peculiar, and more like what I have seen in the towns of continental Europe than those commonly inhabited by men of his class in England. It had a large courtyard, fenced with a strong wall ; and it consisted of three stories. On each floor was one chamber or more, and each had its purpose. On the ground floor was a common room, where the farrier and his family assembled at meal-time ; the second, which, for security's sake, was high up, was divided between the room occupied by the farrier and his wife and an apartment known as the "Great Chamber ;" the next floor was set apart for children and domestics ; and the house had, at the angle, a square tower, with a small platform for making observations. I mention all this, that, as I proceed, the reader may comprehend some passages that might, without such explanation, appear obscure. The house of the farrier in the Strand was afterwards the scene of a conspiracy which well nigh terminated the Barons' Wars by the closing of a gate.

When I rode into the courtyard, my young guide having knocked



at the gate, announced my name and quality, and I was received with great respect by the farrier. Having dismounted, and surrendered my horse into the charge of Dickon, I was ceremoniously conducted by Walter to the second story of his house, and presented by my real name, but without my imaginary title, to his wife.

"Welcome, young squire," she said. "Our house is poor, but whatever it contains is at your service ; you must take the will for the deed, and let hearty hospitality make amends for humble entertainment."

I felt grateful for the honest matron's kindness, and have no doubt she was sincere in her professions. I fear, however, the time did come when she was inclined to curse the hour in which I had found my way under her roof. But let that pass. The farrier's wife survived the troubles which I brought upon her house, and lived to share with all England the peace and prosperity, to bring about which I, Ralph Merley, gave my humble aid to the good King Edward and Robert de Burnel, his great minister.





The Old Strand, near St. Mary-le-Strand

## XX.

### THE FARRIER OF THE STRAND.

**M**Y new acquaintance, the farrier of the Strand, was a man of tall stature and great strength, and looked as if he could have felled an ox at a blow. Moreover, he possessed considerable intelligence, and though he discreetly kept his political opinions to himself, he was quite ready to give me what information I asked. As long, indeed, as I indulged in the good cheer set before me, the conversation carried on related to unimportant, though, to me, not uninteresting, matters. The husband talked of Matthew Paris, a

monk of St. Alban's, and of a knight and man of letters, Sir Roger de Thurkeby, and what Matthew Paris said to Sir Roger, and what Sir Roger said to Matthew Paris ; and his comely spouse talked of the winsome face of the young Countess of Salisbury, and the enormous riches of John Mansel, the king's favourite minister, who had recently escaped from the Tower, and put the sea between himself and his foes, and the wedding of Sir John Gray, a brave and handsome knight, who had obtained the hand of the wealthy widow of Poyntz Piper, the king's late butler, and with her hand the splendid palace built by Poyntz Piper at his manor of Tedington, which all but rivalled the house of Richard, King of the Romans, at Isleworth. No sooner, however, had the excellent woman—who was to set off next morning with her children on a visit to the "White Horse" hostelry—retired, than I made an attempt to draw my host out about affairs of state and the men who were influencing them ; not, however, putting the farrier's hospitality to such a test as to mention that he was harbouring a youth who had defied the enmity and escaped from the fangs of De Montfort.

"It seems," said I, "that London is highly excited about this quarrel between king and barons."

"Never so much excitement since I was a boy," he replied.

"Never since Fitz-Anulph's time ?" I suggested.

"No," said he, eyeing me closely ; "people are merely waiting for an opportunity to break out."

"Then I have come in the nick of time."

"Doubtless you'll be welcome," said the farrier, "for the name of Walter Merley is ever in men's mouths."

"Ay," observed I ; "but the times are changed since Fitz-Anulph's affair, and the Merleys are changed with the times."

"Which means to say that you are a king's man."

"Yes, and the foe of Simon de Montfort till the death of one decides that part of the quarrel."

"Then, Master Merley, take my advice, and be not rash in saying so, for ill, this day, will it fare with him who confesses too openly that he is Earl Simon's foe."

"But it is the right and privilege of an Englishman to say what he thinks."

"Ay, Master Merley ; but in dangerous times it's not well to be too outspoken. T'other day Sir Roger de Thurkeby was telling me a story to the point. A lion called a sheep, and asked her if his breath was sweet. The sheep said, 'No,' and the lion bit off her head for a fool. He then called a wolf, and asked him. The wolf said, 'Yes,' and the lion tore him in pieces for a flatterer. Lastly, he called a fox, and asked him. The fox said he had got a cold, and couldn't smell. Credit me, it is well, at such times as the present, to answer as the fox did."

"But," exclaimed I, "I relish not concealing opinions and dissembling dislikes."

"And yet," said the farrier, in a warning tone, "these may be cheap terms for a man's life at the opening of a struggle, especially," he added with emphasis, "until the sword is drawn."

"Mayhap," said I ; "but assuredly it seems strange to me that affairs should have reached this stage without preparations being made by the other side. Has King Henry no power to put down a rising ?"

"The king and queen are secure in the Tower," answered the farrier, "and have neither men, nor money, nor plans ; while the citizens are rich, and numerous, and resolute. You know that the Londoners have always possessed great privileges."

"Too great," I answered, warmly. "Has not London been a kind

of free republic in the heart of an ancient monarchy since Holy Edward's time, and has she not always had her demagogues, like Longbeard in King Richard's time, and Fitz-Anulph in King Henry's, to egg on the populace against law and order, and league with foreign princes and half-foreign barons? Had I anything to say in the government of England, by the Holy Cross I should find a way to keep barons, and rich citizens, and brawling demagogues in their right place."

"And how, young squire, would you accomplish that?" asked the farrier, evidently at once amazed at my presumption and amused at my enthusiasm.

"I should begin by forming the different races into one great nation."

"You would first have to teach them to speak the same language."

"I believe," said I, "it's true that there wasn't a greater confusion of tongues in the Tower of Babel itself than in merry England; but trust me, good Walter, that we should soon learn to be all of one tongue, if we were once all of one heart and mind."

"Well," said the farrier, "however that may be, it is nearly certain that Englishmen will soon be cutting each other's throats, and that, ere many days pass, the business will begin in London."

"Think you so?"

"It is well known," he replied, "that the barons have this day sent a letter, under Simon de Montfort's seal, to the chief citizens, asking whether they will take part with them in maintaining the Provisions of Oxford, and upholding the cause which, they say, is for the honour of God and the good of the kingdom, and that the citizens have sent messengers to De Montfort, saying they will, saving their duty to the king."

"Which," said I, "means nothing."

"Nothing," answered the farrier—"no more than goat's wool. Meanwhile the city is in a ferment ; in short," added he in a lower tone, "ready for bloodshed and robbery."

"But where," I asked, "is Prince Edward, that he doesn't interfere to put down such rascallions?"

"The prince has his difficulties," answered Walter. "A week since he was at Clerkenwell with his knights, and, being without a groat, he came to the house of the Templars to get money. The citizens rose, and assailed the house of Sir John Gray without Ludgate, plundering his stables ; and the prince, not caring to come to blows with the citizens, went off with his fighting men to Windsor."

"And so," said I, "the royal cause is not likely to be in the ascendant, and there is no hope of the quarrel being accommodated."

"Far from the royal cause being in the ascendant," answered the farrier, "each morning every man who adheres to it is in danger of having his neck broken by the Batchellors ere the day passes ; and for matters being accommodated," continued he, "it would be peace for a day and war for a year. So long, indeed, as Richard de Clare, the great Earl of Gloucester, lived, there was some hope ; for he loved not Simon de Montfort, and he loved England, as Englishmen well knew ; but now Richard de Clare has been lying for months by his father's side in the abbey church of Tewkesbury, and his son, Gilbert de Clare, the young earl, is as pliable as De Montfort could wish. In good sooth, men say that Earl Simon can skilfully mould these barons with his own deep-cut impressions, and especially the younger ones. It is true, Robert Ferrars, the young Earl of Derby, is inclined rather to cock up his bonnet in defiance both of king and barons than to side with either party ; but Gilbert de Clare, and Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford, and the young Lords Fitz-John and De Vesci, are but as wax in Simon's hands."

"Well," said I, rising to seek repose, "one should, I suppose, thank God that he is not a young lord or earl, but a simple squire, since, in that case, he is not exposed to the arts of so great a man. But tell me, good Walter—for I would fain know—how come the commons of London to be so devoted to De Montfort?"

"You must know," said the farrier, "that Earl Simon has much sway over some of the chief citizens, such as Thomas Fitz-Richard, the mayor, and Stephen Buckerele, the marshal; and Fitz-Richard, who was chosen mayor last year, being continued mayor this year, has, as well as Buckerele, gone all lengths to ingratiate himself with the rabble who call themselves the community of the city, has held Folkmotes, and encouraged them to give their vote in the first place; and if the major part say 'Yea, yea,' the thing, no matter how unreasonable, is done."

"So that no power," said I, "is left in the hands of the chief citizens."

"No power is left in the hands of the aldermen," continued Walter; "wherefore the commons have grown so proud and unreasonable, that their tyranny is well nigh intolerable, and they have formed themselves into combinations, some of them numbering a thousand, with the loose young fellows calling themselves Batchelors, and headed by desperadoes wearing white crosses, given them by De Montfort."

"Such as Stephen Fitz-Scrob," said I. "Satan's servants in Christ's livery."

"Yes," continued Walter; "under pretence of keeping the peace, they go about breaking it; and, under pretence of supporting the Provisions of Oxford, they oppress and plunder the king's friends, or men suspected of being such; and now," added the farrier, mournfully, "matters have arrived at such a pass that the blood of the commons is up, and they are ready for any mischief."

"I grieve to hear it," said I, "for I love the commons."

"And yet, Master Merley, you wont take the side they take."

"Nay, by the Holy Cross !" exclaimed I, "never will I follow the multitude to do evil ; mayhap some day they'll follow me to do good."







Demagogues addressing the Populace.

## XXI.

### LONDON.

**I**N spite of the dismal prospects of the cause with the adherents of which I had determined to cast in my lot, for better or for worse, I slept the sound sleep of youth and health, and next morn-

ing—it was a Friday—I rose refreshed from my couch, and rejoiced in the anticipation of novelty, as Walter the Farrier intimated his readiness to conduct me abroad, and show me what was most worth seeing in the capital of England, mentioning that his object was to attend the market which was held every Friday at Smithfield for the sale of horses and cattle.

“Bear in mind,” said he, “that London is not now the safest of places for a stranger ; but remember my warning—be silent, and, under my protection, you’re as safe as if you had all the retainers of the Merleys at your back.”

“Well, good friend,” replied I, smiling, “I promise, for once in my life, to be discreet ;” and as I spoke we sallied from his courtyard into the Strand.

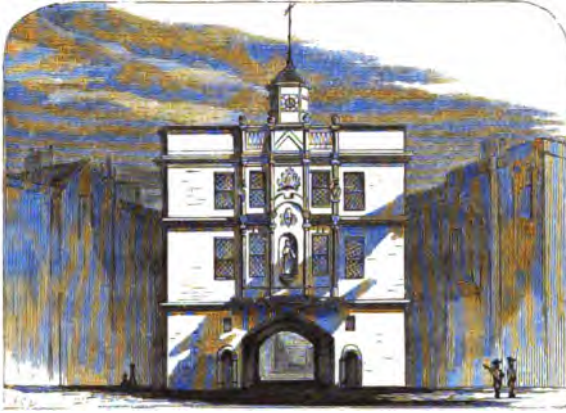
I cannot pretend to doubt that, at that time, and, indeed, even now, to men who had travelled to the East, who had seen Acre before its destruction by the Saracens, in 1291, or Constantinople before its capture by the French and Venetians, in 1203, when the capital of the East, with its lofty walls, its massive towers, its five superb palaces, its five hundred churches, its million of inhabitants, and its long row of gardens on the shores of the Bosphorus, was one of the wonders of the world—I cannot pretend to doubt, I say, that, to such men, London, seen for the first time, must have appeared insignificant and murky. Narrow were the streets ; mean, for the most part, were the houses, with their low stories built of mud and plaster, and the upper stories, constructed chiefly of wood, projecting over the lower ; and dingy were the booths, at which the apprentices kept up a perpetual cry of “What d’ye lack !” Here and there, however, rose buildings of loftier port—churches and religious houses, in which the flame of ancient learning was kept burning, and befitting charities were dispensed to the indigent and poor.

I have a vivid recollection of that morning's walk, as, under the guidance of the farrier, I saw, for the first time, the city where I was destined to share so much odium and participate in so much popularity. Proceeding eastward along the Strand (overgrown with bushes and intersected with rivulets, having, on the side towards the river, where leapt the salmon and glided the swan, the castellated houses or inns of nobles and prelates, and, on the other, gardens and fields which stretched away towards the royal chase and palace of Marylebone, and the two hills of Highgate and Hampstead, and by Pentonville, covered with corn and grass, towards that primeval forest in which the citizens, at times, hunted the wild boar), we reached the village of Charing, where cross-roads branched off to the country; and turning towards Westminster, and passing the palaces of the King of the Romans, and of Philip Basset, the Justiciary of England, and York House, built by Hubert de Burgh, but subsequently acquired by the Archbishop of York, we stood before the palace of the king, with its towers and gardens, and the abbey church, which was slowly but gradually advancing to completion.

Turning eastward, we traversed the Strand; and leaving on our right the palace built by Peter of Savoy, and subsequently purchased by Queen Eleanor for her second son, Prince Edmund of Lancaster, we passed between the house and church of the Knights of the Temple, and the House of Refuge for Jewish converts built by King Henry; and, crossing the bridge that spanned the river Fleet, we found ourselves at the western entrance to the city.

It is said the walls of London were first built by the Emperor Constantine, at the desire of his mother Helena. But, be that as it may, both walls and gates were repaired by King Henry in 1257, and beautified at the cost of the city. It is worthy of remark, that the walls are in the form of a bow and its string; for the city, being

more extensive from east to west than from north to south, and narrower at both ends than in the middle, is encompassed with a wall on the land side which in shape resembles the bow ; while on



Lud-gate

the south side, along the river, the wall is straight as the string. It is fortified with towers and turrets, and has many gates, some of which are built after the Norman fashion, with strong arches and bulwarks, small bricks, and Flanders tiles.

Entering the city by Ludgate, which Henry III. had then lately repaired and beautified with images of Lud and other kings, we soon reached the palace of the Bishop of London, and entered the church of St. Paul, a magnificent edifice recently erected, with a tower and spire more than five hundred feet in height, and then bent our steps to the Tower of London, where the king and queen were then cooped up, not without apprehension that its fortifications might prove ineffectual to save them from the popular fury.

Nor, when I recall to mind the aspect of London that day, can I wonder that they felt some alarm. Everywhere excitement prevailed. The Batchellors patrolled the streets. Seafaring men,

monks, burghers, soldiers, nobles, and desperadoes, appeared in the public places ; and, even if I had been unaware that national affairs had reached a crisis, I could have gused that something unusual was at work. Excitement lighted up every face, and no secret was made of the intention of the multitude to set law at defiance. Indeed, the work of agitation was going openly on. At one corner, a demagogue named Walter Hervey was explaining to the populace that for long they had been suffering under tyranny of a worse kind than oppressed the children of Israel in Egypt, and that a voice now bade them rise, till the ground, and enjoy the fruits thereof ; at another place Stephen Fitz-Scrob was proving to an admiring audience that England was devoured by Jews and foreigners, and that it was the duty of every Englishman not to lose a day in killing the Jews and banishing the foreigners ; at a third spot Sir Rufus Ribaut was relating that lately, in the north of England, near an abbey called Roche, bands of knights, riding fine horses, and armed with shields, and helmets, and coats of mail, issued from the earth, and, after fighting and slaughtering each other for days, disappeared, dragging their horses after them, as if leaving a battle ; and the mad knight, having dilated on the calamities which the vision portended, concluded by assuring his listeners that De Montfort was coming to bind kings in chains, and that the end of the world was at hand.

"It seems," I remarked, as we moved away from the orators, and pushed through the crowd, "that nothing is too absurd for this deluded multitude to swallow."

"Silence, Master Merley, I intreat you," said Walter, in alarm. "Have you nine lives, like a cat, that you can afford to lose one for nothing?"

"No," answered I, "I have only one ; but yet I would rather lose

it at once than keep it to live on in an age and country where the populace are so easily gulled as they now are."

"Here come some young barons of De Montfort's party to show themselves to the people," said Walter, as a thundering cheer, that fairly drowned the voices of the demagogues, greeted a gay troop of horsemen, headed by a young and handsome noble, whom, in the distance, I at once recognised as John Fitz-John. .

"Hurrah for the Lord Fitz-John!" shouted hundreds of voices vociferously. "Hurrah for Fitz-John and Earl Simon de Montfort!"

"And," added others, "may the young lord get the lady of his heart! May the daughter of William Longsword be his! May the Countess of Salisbury be his!"

"It is John Fitz-John," said Walter, in a whisper.

"So I perceive," replied I; "beahrew me if I, rather than unbonnet, and bow, and smile to that rabble under such circumstances, would not walk the street barefoot in beggary, and hungering for the meanest crust."

"Come," said Walter, "let us begone. I now perceive that your discretion is not to be relied on, but I doubt not your courage."

And as Fitz-John, with much ceremony, stopped in the middle of the street to speak to Stephen Buckerel, the Marshal of London, we freed ourselves from the crowd, and, having made our way first to Smithfield, soon reached the courtyard of Walter's tenement in the Strand.

"Now, Master Merley, I must needs be plain with you," said the farrier, as we ascended to the second story of his house. "You have proved, beyond all question, that your temper is too fiery to be restrained even by the danger of having a dozen daggers in your body."

"God and the saints forbend!" exclaimed I, laughing.

"However," continued the farrier, "it is not safe for you—mayhap, not for me—that you should be exposed to the hazards which a young king's man of hot blood and high spirit must run while going about London, as London now is; wherefore the sooner you are among men who think with you so much the better. You must, without delay, take service with the prince."

"An excellent scheme, doubtless," said I; "but how am I to manage it?"

"Fear not," replied the farrier; "I have more to say with some great men than you guess. Both sides need the services of the farrier of the Strand; and Prince Edward's Grey Lyard can no more do without me than De Montfort's brown barb. Leave all to me. Only do not venture without these walls; and, ere three days pass, I promise, on the word of an honest man, to take you to Windsor, and present you to the prince."

"And bind me to you for ever, good friend—true friend!" exclaimed I, springing to my feet, and almost transported at the prospect.

"Nay, no thanks," said Walter; "it costs me but a few words. You are a hopeful recruit; and when Prince Edward hears what I have to say of you, trust me he'll welcome you as a woman welcomes flowers in May."

I did not much doubt the farrier's power to make good his word. In spite of his silence, I had, on the previous evening, suspected that he was a royalist at heart; and that day I had, from a slight circumstance, been led to believe that he was recognised as such by the nobles of the king's party.

When we were leaving Westminster, we met a stately personage riding towards the palace.

•

"Well, farrier," cried he, reining up his steed, while his train halted, "what think you of the weather?"

"My lord," replied Walter, "the clouds are gathering. Before twenty-four hours we may have a storm."

"So soon?" exclaimed the noble; "and will it be severe, think you?"

"I fear it," said Walter, simply—"very severe."

"Then," said the other, "we must look out for shelter. It is vain to contend with the elements."

And with a significant gesture, which I observed, but could not interpret, he moved on, followed by his train.

"Who is that?" inquired I.

"It is the Lord Philip Basset, the king's justiciary."

"And one of the nobles of the king's party?"

"One of the stanchest of them, as he may find to his cost if the storm blows towards Westminster."

"Ho! ho!" muttered I. "Well do I now know what storm is meant, and a little do I begin to comprehend my friend the farrier."

Walter started, but said nothing, as if leaving me to draw my own conclusion, which I had failed not to do, ere his conversation about Prince Edward confirmed what I had suspected.

"Then," said I, "you are a royalist?"

"Young gentleman," he replied, "you have tried to get my opinions by hints, and now you try a direct question; but you will be no more successful one way than the other. You know the proverb about a nod being as good as a wink to a blind horse."





Paul's Cross

## XXII.

## THE JEWS IN DANGER.

“WELL, good friend, what tidings?” inquired I, eagerly, as, on the evening of Friday, the farrier returned from the city, where he had been holding a solemn conference with his brother-in-law, John Gizors, the armourer.

“Truly, I know nothing for certain,” said Walter; “but it appears that the commons are about to begin the work of reform, as they call it, by wreaking their fury on the Jews. However, that will not kindle your wrath, the Jews being a body for whom knights and gentlemen have as little compassion as their neighbours.”

“I confess that I like them not,” said I; “but my prejudice is not so strong as to wish to hear of their being attacked and injured

without cause ; and for the treatment with which they have met from Norman barons I consider myself in no way responsible."

"It is passing strange, certainly," remarked Walter, "how people relish and chuckle over the story of Richard de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, and the unfortunate Jew at Tewkesbury. You know the story, Master Merley?"

"No."

"It was in the year 1259, and the earl was living in great state at his castle of Tewkesbury, when, one Saturday, some of his people told him that a Jew, while near the castle, had fallen into a foul pit, and that he refused, from superstition, to be taken out that day, it being his Sabbath. 'Well,' quoth the earl, 'let the Jew have his way.' Next morning they came and asked if the Jew was now to be taken out of the pit. 'Nay, nay,' cried the earl. 'If the unbelieving dog would not let himself be taken out for fear of desecrating his Sabbath, we will not desecrate ours for the sake of his worthless life.' So there the Jew remained till Monday morning, and when the earl's men then went to drag him out, they found he was dead."

"A barbarous piece of business!" exclaimed I; "and one which shows that Richard de Clare, with all his feudal grandeur, was without that charity which covers the multitude of sins. But what is the pretext for attacking the Jews of London now?"

"Why," answered the farrier, "you know there was a riot about a Jew exacting usurious interest the other day; but, doubtless, the real motive with such men as Fitz-Scrob is the lust for plunder. Besides, the commons are furious against the queen and the prince; and the queen and the prince are thought to countenance the Jews. Many of them followed her from Provence, and they have since been well treated; for though, at times, being the king's property, they've

been made to open their coffers, both the king and the King of the Romans have, like Henry II., their grandsire, shown the Jews favour. Since the beginning of the reign they've been allowed to build houses and synagogues, and to worship after their own fashion—being admonished, at the same time, to sing their psalms so low as not to give scandal to Christians. But they have rather abused their prosperity, and been harsher than ever to men who were at their mercy."

"I suppose they have proved," said I, "that the mercy of a Jew is worse than the cruelty of a Christian."

"It is true," replied Walter; "and now that the day of danger has come, what will their ill-gotten wealth avail them? What will the wealth of Kokben Abraham, the very richest of them, avail him?"

"And why," asked I, eager for information, "do they think the prince favours the Jews?"

"Because," answered Walter, "they are said to be high at the court of his brother-in-law, the King of Castile, who is reported to have Jew magicians in his service."

"Ah," said I, willing to display my knowledge, "you speak of the learned Alphonso, who is so wise in his own conceit that he said, if God Almighty had asked his advice at the Creation he could have given Him good counsel."

"A profane speech," exclaimed Walter.

"Nevertheless," continued I, "to give the devil his due, Alphonso is one of the most learned personages in Europe, and the men whom people call Jewish sorcerers are really astronomers, who have constructed his astronomical tables, of which our posterity will not think lightly. For the rest, the Jews of Spain boast of having been sent to the Iberian peninsula by Solomon; they were there as early

as the fourth century ; they have ever stood high in Spain both with Christians and Moors ; they have furnished physicians to every court of Europe, including that of Rome ; and it has been the constant custom of the kings of Castile to protect and even love the Jews."

"And if all tales are true," said Walter, "the protection and love of the present King of Castile extend even to the Jewish women."

"What?" asked I, scarcely crediting my ears, as I vaguely guessed the insinuation conveyed.

"It seems," said Walter, "that King Alphonso not only employs Jews as astronomers, but entertains a Jewess as his mistress."

"Saints in heaven!" exclaimed I, in utter astonishment, "lives there Christian prince or knight who can so degrade himself?"

"It is as I say," replied Walter ; "and," added he, "men think that this piece of sinful folly will one day cost King Alphonso his crown. Ah ! Master Merley, you see that people may be very learned, and yet woefully lack discretion. Verily, it reminds me of the proverb that the greatest clerks are not always the wisest men."



## XXIII.

## THE MIDNIGHT MASSACRE.



AFTER retiring to rest on the evening of that Friday, which I have ever since remembered with peculiar feelings as the day when I first set foot in London, I was somewhat surprised to hear bolt and bar drawn upon me. However, I did not doubt being perfectly safe in the house of my friend the farrier, and without thinking much of the circumstance, began to regale my imagination with great deeds to be performed when I should enter the service of Prince Edward.

I believe that hours passed in this way, and I was just on the point of dropping asleep, when I was startled by the tolling of a bell, which, though seemingly at some distance, sounded loud and distinct. An hour earlier I should probably have risen to ascertain the cause, but I was now drowsy, and persuading myself that it must be the custom of the Londoners to toll a bell as Friday

was expiring, I laid down my head, and soon slept as soundly as ever I had done at Linden, or Oxford, or the castle of the Merleys.

I had just roused myself next morning, and arrayed my person, not without that care peculiar to youth, when Walter the Farrier withdrew the bar, knocked at my door, and being told to enter, appeared with a countenance on which there was care and anxiety.

"Pardon me, Master Merley, for drawing bolt upon you," said he ; "but I knew there was to be bloodshed last night, and I was willing rather to run the risk of offending you than that you should have been exposed to the danger which would have beset you had you left this house in my absence, and made your way over the Fleet Bridge."

"What has been going on, good Walter?" asked I, with curiosity, as I followed him to the chamber where we were to break our fast, and took my seat at his board.

"Never in my time has there been such a night in London," answered the farrier. "It was an understood matter yesterday that at the sound of St. Paul's bell the populace should rise, and at midnight it was rung by command of Stephen Buckerel, the marshal, and soon people gathered from streets and lanes, like eagles to the carnage."

"Well," asked I, "what happened next?"

"Led by Buckerel and John Fitz-John," continued the farrier, "the mob commenced a massacre of the Jews, and to encourage others by his example, the young Lord Fitz-John went to the house of Kokben Abraham, the richest Jew in London, and drawing his sword, ran him through the body."

"A most cruel deed," exclaimed I ; "and much I grieve to hear that John Fitz-John could be guilty of such ; that comes of being a disciple of Simon de Montfort. But go on, good Walter, I pray you—I am all attention."

"Well, as you may suppose, the example of John Fitz-John was

not lost, and the mob, hounded on by Stephen Fitz-Scrob and Osear the Scot, and other varlets, went from house to house slaying and plundering. Five hundred Jews, at least, were killed."

"Good Heavens!" I exclaimed; "and in cold blood, too, or something like it."

"Yes," continued Walter, who apparently did not very strongly sympathise with my indignation, "and most of the others were turned out of their beds, driven into the streets, and hunted about half-naked."

"And what became of them at last?"

"Matters at last grew so desperate that many of them were conveyed for protection to the Tower, where alone there is a chance of saving them from the fury of the commons."

"I blame not the commons so much as the men who egg them on. My Lord Fitz-John's spurs should be hacked from his heels, and Stephen Buckere! should be hanged on a gallows."

"These were dangerous words to utter in the places through which I've just passed," said Walter.

"But is not everything quiet now?" I asked.

"Would that everything were quiet!" replied Walter. "When I passed Paul's Cross, Sir Rufus Ribaut was addressing a mob, and urging them to go on with the good work so well begun, and to demolish the houses and synagogues which the king had allowed Jews to build, and impressing upon them that, so far as unbelievers are concerned, it is the duty of all Christians to kill and slay without mercy. I like not the Jews myself, but there should be limits even to hatred towards those who cherish religious errors."

"So think I," was my answer. "And look you, good Walter, albeit I would not scruple to slay fifty or a hundred men in fair fight, yet this system of killing human beings—whether Jews or Christians

—in cold blood, is murder ; and if it is done in order to get at the hoards of the victims, it is murder of the blackest kind."

"Nathless," said Walter, "it is bootless to mourn over the fate of a few hundred Jews, when we know not how many Christians in London may have their throats cut ere the sun sets."

"You seem anxious," said I.

"Men with others looking to them do feel anxious in such cases," said the farrier ; "but I trust they will not meddle with me nor mine."

"What would you do if they came ?" asked I.

The farrier pointed to the iron club that reclined against the wall in the corner.

"Seest thou that weapon ?"

"Yes," replied I.

"Couldst do anything with that ?" he asked.

"Oh, I dare say," said I, "I could do something with it if pushed to extremity."

I thought he looked rather scornful at what he considered boyish bravado, and I rose to convince him that he did me wrong. In fact, he little knew his man. I took the huge club calmly in my right hand, and swung it, not easily, but with dexterity ; then changed it to my left, and repeated the process.

"Methinks, good Walter, I could smash a few dozen heads with it if put on my mettle," I said, with great calmness.

"Doubtless you could," said Walter, admiringly. "Trust me, Master Merley, I will put no further questions of the kind. You have by that performance given me in a few moments a history of your apprenticeship to chivalry. The squire of your years who can swing that club as you can, has spent little of his time in indolence or riotous living."



"It is a formidable weapon," I remarked, as I again examined the club, "and in good hands would do much execution."

"It is likely enough," replied the farrier, as he took it in his left hand, and swung it almost as easily as I could flourish my sword. "I'll tell you what it is, Master Merley: had Kokben Abraham had a club of this kind, and been able to use it to any purpose, my young Lord Fitz-John, with all his pride and bravery, would have thought twice ere going near him."

"True," said I: "and I for one hold it cowardly to fall on people like the Jews, who have not the power of resisting. I marvel that men and gentlemen can so demean themselves."

"Doubtless there is religious frenzy at the bottom of it, and many think they are doing God a service. However, when my Lord Fitz-John begins to massacre the Christians as he has done the Jews, I should advise him not to try to deal with me as he did with Kokben Abraham."

"He will hardly venture on commencing operations with so formidable a foe as you," I remarked.

"It's hard to tell what he may do," replied Walter. "They say he's quite beside himself about the young Countess of Salisbury. She is a ward of Queen Eleanor, and my Lord Fitz-John, seeing that there's no hope for him unless the government's turned upside down, is ready to go all lengths against the court, whether with De Montfort or the rabble. Nor," added Walter, "can I marvel that he is a little infatuated when I think what a face the countess has."

"Is she in truth so fair?" asked I, carelessly.

"As fair as ever the sun shone on," answered the farrier; "or," added he, "as fair as was Queen Eleanor when she entered London this time twenty-seven years, cheered by the same people who now want to tear her to pieces."



The Tower of London.

## XXIV.

## THE QUEEN AND THE LONDONERS.

IT was now, as the reader knows, the morning of Saturday, and one of those summer mornings when the sun shines fair on pool and stream, and even lightens up the dark and dingy places of populous towns. Not caring to spend such a day shut up within the walls of the farrier's house in the Strand, listening to the sound of his forge, or viewing London from his tower, and prompted, I must confess, by the curiosity and love of novelty so strong in youth to see whatever of an exciting kind is going on, I, Ralph Merley, having paid a visit to my horse Harfagher, persuaded myself that I should exercise a degree of discretion that would preclude all danger, and, after much trouble, persuaded the stalwart Walter—who was going to confer with John Gizors as to the propriety of shipping

their wives off to Normandy in case of matters becoming worse—to allow me to bear him company into the city.

“Had the times been peaceful, and the city been quiet,” said the farrier, “I might readily enough have got thee access to the Tower, where there is much to please the eye of a youthful warrior ; not to mention the queen’s ladies, of whom you might have got a glimpse about the garden where they walk, looking at the flowers, themselves the fairest flowers of all.”

“Would to God you could, good Walter !” said I, with some difficulty resisting the temptation to tell him that there was one among those court damsels whose face I would fain have beheld, and whose name I would fain have asked.

The city still had the aspect of excitement, though the crowds that had appeared on the previous day were no longer to be seen. The Batchellors, however, perseveringly perambulated the streets in search of king’s friends, and some of them ventured to stop and interrogate us as we walked along. But a few words, which to me were mysterious, somewhat disdainfully spoken by the farrier, silenced each inquiry ; and I was so struck with the success of his answer that I could not help expressing my surprise.

“I marvel much, my good friend,” said I, “that you, who may be supposed not to belong to the faction of De Montfort, suffer so little molestation from his adherents.”

“It is a long story, which I may tell you at another time,” replied Walter. “Meanwhile, know that, so long as Stephen Buckerel has power with the multitude, I am safe ; when his power ceases my security is at an end—and mayhap that may be sooner than he or I wot ; for it is the way with a mob, when weary of persecuting enemies, to turn round upon friends.”

As, not without seeing traces of the massacre of the previous

night, we reached the Poultry, where was the house of John Gizors, we found the armourer standing at his threshold.

"What has become of the crowd, John?" asked Walter, after the first greetings were over. "Have the commons tired of working mischief, and gone to their homes?"

"Nay," answered the armourer, in a half-foreign accent; "listen, and you'll know better. There is a mob before the Tower, screeching and howling for the Jews who have been sent there for safety. And would," exclaimed the armourer, sincerely, "that the king would surrender them, as it might stop their mouths, and save people whose lives are of more value!"

"As mariners throw a tub to the whale," said Walter.

I observed that, as this brief conversation was taking place, men began to pass hurriedly along the streets, and that among the Batchellors there was an evident increase of excitement. They gathered together, talked fast to each other, and gave indications, not to be mistaken, of having some new game in view. I pointed this out to Walter, who looked about, not without anxiety.

"What can they be up to now?" he asked, just as cries arose which sufficiently answered his question.

"The queen is escaping!" shouted one.

"The queen has left the Tower-stairs in her barge!" cried a second.

"She," exclaimed a third, "who has misled the king—who encouraged him to break the charter and set aside the Provisions of Oxford."

"Who has dealings with witches," continued a fourth, "and who has poisoned a young damsel, named Rosamond, whom the king loved."

"Let us to London Bridge," suggested a fifth.

"To London Bridge!" shouted all.

As these cries passed from mouth to mouth a mob was gradually formed, and, as they made in the direction indicated, Walter the Farrier and I followed—or, I should rather say, we were carried along by the stream—neither of us without painful apprehensions of what might be the consequences. When we reached London Bridge the crowd was immense. In fact, the mob that had been besieging the Tower, with threats and imprecations, had followed the barge up the river, and, halting on and about the bridge, appeared bent on mischief.

"Drown the witch!" cried some.

"Yes, down with the sorceress!" cried others.

It seems that, alarmed by the cries, the yells, and the furious menaces of the mob in front of the Tower, the queen had deemed it expedient to leave the great fortress of the metropolis, with the idea of proceeding to Windsor; and accordingly she entered her state barge, accompanied by her ladies of honour; by her second son, Prince Edmund of Lancaster, a boy of seventeen; and by John the Dwarf, from the Isle of Wight, whose height, though he was more than twenty years of age, did not exceed three feet, but who, unlike most dwarfs, was justly and even handsomely proportioned. As the barge, with the queen, and Prince Edmund, the ladies, and the dwarf, moved up the Thames, the howling and hooting became louder, and Eleanor was, doubtless, somewhat agitated. She had the advantage, however, of very faintly comprehending the language in which the offensive epithets were addressed to her; and she had no idea that anything like actual violence would be offered to the wife of the King of England. In this she was much mistaken.

No sooner, indeed, did the queen's barge near London Bridge, than, at a signal given by one of the ringleaders of the mob—I have

heard that it was Stephen Fitz-Scrob, who, attended by his comrade, Oscar the Scot, was foremost in the business—the assault commenced. Never, in my long and somewhat eventful life, have I witnessed such a spectacle. Eggs, sheep's feet, and all kinds of filth, were showered upon the barge; and the mob shouted with delight as they remarked the terror which seized the queen's ladies, who wrung their hands and shrieked with affright. I looked round to my friend the farrier to utter an indignant exclamation, but we had been separated, and my eyes only encountered the gaze of men whose faces denoted frenzied gratification at the scene, and who added their voices to each cry that the mob raised of "Drown the witch!" and "Down with the sorceresses!"

It was just at that moment when the peril increased fiftyfold—when, in fact, the mob had begun to tear large stones from the bridge, and to throw them at the barge, and when I was on the point of exposing myself to almost certain destruction by an attempt to push forward to the spot occupied by Stephen Fitz-Scrob and Oscar the Scot, and precipitate them into the river—that Thomas Fitz-Richard, the mayor, appeared, and addressed the crowd in a tone which made me suppose he was not altogether innocent of the beginning of the outrage.

"The mayor, the mayor! Hurrah for the mayor!" cried the mob.

"Come, come," said he, "this will never do. Zeal in the good cause is all well enough, but now ye are going too far."

And, as Thomas Fitz-Richard spoke, Stephen Fitz-Scrob gave a signal, which, being passed by Oscar the Scot, put a stop to the more serious part of the business; though still rotten eggs continued to be thrown, and still the unfortunate ladies were saluted as "witches" and "sorceresses."

Meanwhile, the mayor, whom I was watching keenly, as, in after

years, he learned to his cost, descended to the river, and offered the queen his protection. As a return to the Tower would have been dangerous, he proposed to conduct her to the palace of the Bishop of London, near the church of St. Paul. Accordingly, the queen and her son, with the ladies of honour and the dwarf, hurriedly left the barge, and, under the escort of Thomas Fitz-Richard, commenced their progress. But the mob, checked, though not daunted, by the presence of the mayor, pressed with insulting cries upon their track, and, indeed, got so close upon the heels of the queen, when she reached the gate of the palace, that both she and her ladies were in the utmost alarm and confusion. As the gate opened, they, guided by the mayor, huddled in, pressing and pushing without order. Every one, apparently, was much too anxious for her own safety to have a thought to spare about that of her neighbour.



## XXV.

## THE ROAD TO RENOWN.



T the time the Mayor of London came to the queen's rescue my indignation was high ; and, not feeling quite certain that in witnessing, without interference, the outrage on Eleanor and her maids of honour, I had acted in a manner quite worthy of a candidate for the honours of chivalry, I pushed forward to the very front of the mob that followed the queen to the gate of the bishop's palace, in case anything should occur to justify me, as a stripling brought up to serve God and the ladies, in drawing the sword for royalty in distress, and beauty in tears.

I afterwards learned that I had been taken for one of the leaders of the De Montfort faction, and that I had had the distinction of being supposed to be one of the many young nobles who were attaching themselves to Earl Simon's fortunes, hundreds of whom were, like myself, too young to be girt with the belt of knighthood.

It thus happened that I unconsciously had the advantage of having way made for me as I pressed forward, and that I was close upon the queen and her ladies when they went pell-mell into the gate of the palace. But what was my surprise when I saw four of the Batchellors steal silently forward, seize the damsel who was last



to enter, and bear her off, in spite of her struggles ! I did not see her face, over which, indeed, her wimple was closely drawn ; but I burned with indignation as I observed her struggles, and, without a moment's hesitation, I dashed among her captors.

"Varlets !" said I, "unhand that demoiselle, or, by the Holy Cross, you will fare the worse !" and I drew my sword.

"A king's man !" cried the Batchellors, as three of them flourished their bludgeons, and prepared to resist.

"What !" I asked, as I freed the maiden from the grasp of the fourth, "know you not your friends from your foes ? And is it thus that you serve the cause of truth and righteousness ?"

The Batchellors seemed somewhat perplexed ; and as they paused, and the damsel clung, almost fainting, to my left arm, I considered what was to be done. By this time I had observed that there was a gate which communicated with one of the wings of the palace ; and I believed that, if I could reach this gate, she might gain admission, even although I had to fight to the death to cover her retreat. I was rapidly considering how a movement might be executed with the greatest chance of success, when another person appeared on the scene ; and I was half relieved, half daunted, when in the new-comer I recognised Stephen Fitz-Scrob ; but without showing any change of resolution, I faced him with a flashing eye.

"What !" said he—recognising me as the person whom, a few days earlier, he, when bearing the message of De Montfort, had seen in Hertfordshire—"a friend of the Lord Fitz-John !"

"Even so," answered I ; "and, as a friend of John Fitz-John, I want to know why the good cause is to be discredited by attempts to carry off noble ladies ? But, be that as it may," I added, "here I stand, sword in hand, a squire of noble blood, determined to run the first man through the body who lays his hand on this demoiselle,

who has been thrown on my protection. I will fight to the death in her quarrel, and I need hardly remind a clerk of Oxford what the poet says as to woman being a pleasing prize."

Fitz-Scrob smiled at the mention of Oxford, and I saw my battle was more than half won. After a moment's consideration, he seemed to decide on yielding, and to be in search of an excuse for doing so with a good grace.

"There has been some mistake, boys," he, after much hesitation, said to the Batchellors. "This is not the lady we want; this damsel is taller by some inches, and slenderer to boot, than she whom we seek. Wherefore, gentle sir," he added, turning to me, "I leave you in possession of your prize without further words, and grieve from my heart that aught has been done by the Batchellors to offend a friend of my Lord Fitz-John."

Having thus expressed himself, Fitz-Scrob endeavoured to draw off his four myrmidons. They, however, were evidently the reverse of tractable. Indeed, they appeared to treat his arguments with something resembling contempt; and, evidently meditating an attack, left him in solitude, turned round, and advanced with desperate intent. But they were too late for their purpose. I had gained the door, knocked loudly, and seen it open, as they reached it with a rush. I placed the lady gently within, returned to encounter the desperadoes, and, after running one of them through the shoulder, and inflicting a flesh wound on another, I entreated Fitz-Scrob to carry off his friends, that I might be saved from the responsibility of needlessly slaughtering them; and then, leaving him to deal with them as he liked, I sprang back, and had the satisfaction of being admitted by the bishop's porter. In an instant the gate closed with a slam in the face of my beaten and baffled foes, and I stood beside the fair being whom I had saved.

"Sir," said she, as she drew aside her wimple, and revealed features that might have turned a wiser head than mine, "I pray you to rest here as long, at least, as to give the queen an opportunity of thanking you for the service you have done her poor kinswoman."

"Methinks, gentle maiden," said I, recognising with astonishment the damsel I had rescued from the boar in the northern forest—"methinks we have met ere this."

"Ah!" she said, not without a look of pleased surprise, "I now remember me, so that my obligation to you is double. How can I ever reward you?"

"By one smile, fair damsel," I answered. "But speak not of that," added I, seeing that she turned away with what I thought hauteur, and remembering that I was Dame Juliana Merley's grandson. "A gentleman should covet no higher reward than the ennobling consciousness of having done his duty."

Ere this, the queen's ladies had discovered that, in their haste to put the gate of the bishop's palace between them and the mob, they had left one of their number behind. Loud was the uproar, and dire were the conjectures, in consequence. Eleanor, in Provençal, invoked the aid of every saint in the calendar, and Margaret Bisset, a holy maid, and much given to exercises of devotion, prayed loudly and fervently that the stray lamb might be saved from the ravening wolves that were going about seeking whom they might devour.

No sooner, however, did Eleanor's ladies of honour hear it whispered that the missing demoiselle was safe than the whole bevy flocked down to the courtyard, each more gaily attired and fascinating than the other, to congratulate her, and asking countless questions, and, all talking at once, carried her off to the queen.

Meanwhile I was courteously invited by the gentlemen of the bishop's household to accompany them to their hall and taste their

good cheer. I frankly told my name, rank, and lineage, and seated myself at the board to share their mid-day meal, which was not the worse for being provided at the expense of a churchman.

"Now do relate, valiant squire," said one of the gentlemen, "how this adventure came to pass?"

"Willingly, fair sir," answered I; "but, in the first place, deign to gratify my curiosity by telling me the name of the fair demoiselle to whom I have had the honour of rendering a service."

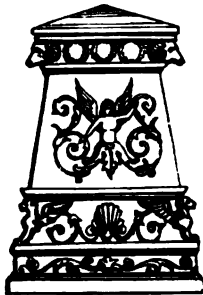
"What!" cried they all, "know you not whom you've had the good fortune to succour?"

"No."

"Why, surely she is the young Countess of Salisbury."

"The deuce!" exclaimed I, with a mixture of feeling in which I confess satisfaction had little part.

"*Pardieu!*" said one of the gentlemen, with surprise depicted in his face, "you seem almost disappointed. Methinks, my valiant Northman, you scarce deserve such luck who esteem it so lightly. The Countess of Salisbury is held to be the fairest of all the fair maidens in Queen Eleanor's court; and a man to whom Fortune has vouchsafed the opportunity of signalizing his gallantry in her behalf is, at least, some way on the road to renown."





Ralph Merley's Introduction to Queen Eleanor

## XXVI.

### ROYALTY IN DISTRESS.

**O**N the day when I happened, so unexpectedly, and under such romantic circumstances, to find myself in the palace of Henry, Bishop of London, that prelate, who was a partisan of De Montfort,

had set out for Oxford, to be present at a mock Parliament which the great Earl of Leicester had convened without the knowledge of the king or council ; and the gentlemen of the household, notwithstanding the unsettled state of the city, were all the merrier for his absence. I was fortunate enough to discover that one of them was Matthew Beke, who had been a scholar at Oxford at the time when the legate was attacked ; and albeit he, being a friend of John Fitz-John, and sympathizing with the politics of that young baron, was at issue with me on the great question that divided England, we contrived to make each other understand that we were on different sides, without expressing strong opinions or coming to high words.

However, I, having described my adventure with the wolves of Yorkshire, was beginning to warm with the good wine of the palace, and to dilate somewhat more loudly than I ought to have done, especially among strangers, on the state of affairs, when I was summoned to the presence of the queen, and conducted to the chamber where Eleanor, with her ladies, and her son, and the dwarf were quartered. As I entered, the ladies, including the noble demoiselle whom I had rescued, were seated around, probably musing pensively over the dangers that beset them ; but the queen, quite recovered from her agitation, was pacing the room, and, so far as a stranger could judge, looked quite herself.

Eleanor was no longer young. Indeed, she had reached her forty-third year ; and, notwithstanding the gay recklessness which the poetess-queen had displayed in the midst of poverty and trouble, time had left its traces. Her fair face was somewhat faded ; her brown hair was streaked with white ; her form was no longer quite symmetrical ; but the wife of King Henry still retained much of that beauty and grace which in her girlhood had captivated all hearts, and made the daughter of Count Raymond celebrated, at

the courts of Europe and in the palaces of Acre, as Eleanor la Belle.

Nor, though in her ninth lustre, did the queen disdain those innocent arts by which the admiration of men is won and retained. Nothing could have exceeded the elegance of her attire. Even the scene of the morning had not rendered her negligent in this respect. Her head, of which the hair was turned up behind and inclosed in a caul of golden network, was ornamented with a chaplet or garland of gold filigree and clusters of precious stones ; and her "quintise," or upper tunic, with short sleeves, bordered with scalloping and vandyking, worked in various patterns, according to the fashion of the day, was worn so long behind as to trail on the rushes that covered the floor, but carefully held up in front, so as not to impede her graceful steps.

I may mention that it was the headgear and the long trains of the queen and the high-born dames of that period which exposed them to the satire of the poet, who compared them to peacocks and pies ; "for," said he, "these birds delight in feathers of various colours and tails that sweep the ground ; and our court ladies make their tails longer than the peacocks and the pies ;" and he, moreover, counsels them, if their feet and ankles be not small and delicate, to let the quintise fall on the pavement and hide them ; but, if they are shapely and beautiful, to hold up the robe in front for the convenience of stepping briskly. I have no doubt, however, that the queen and her ladies understood this as well as the poet.

As my name was announced, I entered the chamber. Eleanor halted, turned round, and, with a slight start and change of countenance, regarded me with undisguised curiosity.

"Good youth, brave youth," said the queen, speaking in Norman-French, but with difficulty, for her habitual language was that of her

native Provence, "your features recall to my memory a friend of my girlhood, Beatrice de Courtenay, whom I had well nigh forgotten. Are you of noble blood?"

"Madam," I answered, "the Merleys have ever been esteemed so, since my ancestor came to England with William the Norman, and my grandmother was daughter of an Earl in whose veins runs the blood of Ethelred and Alfred."

"And your mother?"

"My mother died when I was in infancy."

"But of what house was she?" asked the queen, with curiosity and impatience.

"Madam," answered I, somewhat crestfallen, "I know not;" and I began to feel the awkwardness which the want of this knowledge might entail.

"It was my fancy," said the queen, as if speaking to herself, "and impossible. But, young squire," she continued, turning to me, "say how the Queen of England can reward you for your gallant rescue of her husband's kinswoman?"

"Madam," replied I, feeling much agitation, which I confess arose less from being for the first time face to face with a queen than in the presence of the demoiselle of whom I had been dreaming for weeks, "my apprenticeship to chivalry in the castle of my ancestors would, indeed, avail me little, if, albeit not wearing the gold spurs of knighthood, I coveted any reward for rescuing a noble demoiselle in distress."

"You will win the spurs yet," said the queen, "and perhaps," she added, gaily, "the demoiselle, too;" and, apparently forgetting all danger, Eleanor laughed at my agitation and the confusion of the young countess, while her ladies tittered in chorus, with the exception of Margaret Bisset, the holy maid, with dark hair and a dark,



thoughtful eye, which I, little guessing her meditations, vainly flattered myself was fixed upon me with interest.

"Vanity of vanities," muttered she, audibly; "all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

"Bisset speaks truly," said the queen, more seriously; "and, for my part, I much fear me that our days for vanity have gone by, and that in those we have still to see there is like to be enough of vexation of spirit. But," added she, "that is no reason why this brave youth should not win the spurs which he covets, seeing that, if there is to be war between the king and his barons, he will not lack the opportunity."

"Nor neglect it, madam, I would fain hope," said I, somewhat proudly.

"And what thinkest thou of the Provisions of Oxford?" asked the queen, as if to sound me.

"It would be presumptuous in me to give an opinion in your gracious presence," answered I, with more than my wonted caution; "but this I say frankly, that, when men appeal to the sword, I am ready to draw mine for the king, and against the men who want to do with England as their fancy dictates. I came from the North with intent to offer my services to my lord the prince, and I only await an opportunity of so doing."

"Ah!" exclaimed the queen, a thought suddenly occurring to her, "Providence has sent this good youth to our aid. He can escape; he can bear a letter to Edward; and my brave son will come, through all perils, to our succour. Have you craft or courage enough to make your way out of this rebellious city to the prince at Windsor?"

"For craft, madam," I replied, "I was bred in the north country, where men are thought to have long heads; and for courage, I hold

myself bound to face all dangers to prove my devotion to a lady and a queen."

"Do so, brave youth," said Eleanor; "your way may be perilous, but it is one which will conduct you to fortune. Meantime, remain here in safety with the gentlemen of the bishop's household. To-morrow I will give you instructions, and arrange for your departure."

After some further conversation on the subject of my mission, I was graciously dismissed; and, returning to the hall somewhat elate, I made myself at home with Matthew Beke and the bishop's gentlemen; played chess with them indoors and bowls without, and was rapidly initiated into the latest fashions and styles of dress. I found, however, to my dismay, that it would be no easy matter to escape. Matthew Beke, trusting to the protection he derived from the name of John Fitz-John, ventured out to ascertain how matters were, and returned with intelligence which caused me some depression.

"It would be rushing on to destruction, or imprisonment at the least," said Matthew. "Never have I seen such a row. Oxford, when we hunted the legate, was nothing to it. The Londoners are out in swarms, patrolling the streets, some on horseback, some on foot, questioning every passenger, and breaking open houses to search for Jews, and foreigners, and king's men. After the affair of this morning you are a marked man. Hundreds of the Batchellors know you by sight, and you could not escape them as you did the wolves, by getting up a tree. So, Master Merley, remain where you are, and be thankful that you're in good company and safe quarters."

"Nevertheless," said I, "I would fain—for reasons which I cannot communicate—I would fain, were it possible, return, ere midnight to-morrow, to my lodgings in the Strand."

"I see," said Matthew, laughing, "there is some fair damsel in the case. Well, I who have loved myself, would fain aid you, and

methinks I can. My Oxford cap and gown, which I had to doff when I walked penitentially through London, are still in my possession. You can don them when the sun sets to-morrow, and I'll pass you through Ludgate as a clerk going to my Lord Fitz-John, who has ridden to Oxford to attend De Montfort's Parliament. The scholars of Oxford, who have never forgiven the legate business, are noted for their zeal in the cause of the barons ; so you could not have a better disguise."

"Thanks, old friend," said I, gratefully ; "may I ere long have it in my power to requite your courtesy."

"I suppose," said Matthew, "I must not say 'Amen' to that ; for it would virtually be praying that your side may, ere long, be uppermost."

"More unlikely things have come to pass," said I ; and, allowing our conversation on the subject to drop for the time, we talked of old days, and I learned, for the first time, as Matthew Beke had the day before learned from John Fitz-John, that Marmaduke Twenge, another of the scholars of Oxford, was to wed my kinswoman Isabel, one of three daughters of Roger Merley de Merley.

Next day—it was Sunday—I was again summoned by the queen, and intrusted by her with a letter to the prince, and a ring, at the sight of which, she assured me, all the gates of Windsor would fly open. And Matthew Beke was true to the promise he had made. I threw the scholar's gown over my half-martial dress, and, on the evening of Sunday, as a clerk of Oxford, I passed safely through Ludgate, and made my way to the house of Walter the Farrier, who had given me up for lost.

"Now, good friend," said I, after narrating my adventures, "I must remind you of the promise you made to take me to Prince Edward on the word of an honest man."

"And on the word of an honest man I'll keep it," replied Walter.

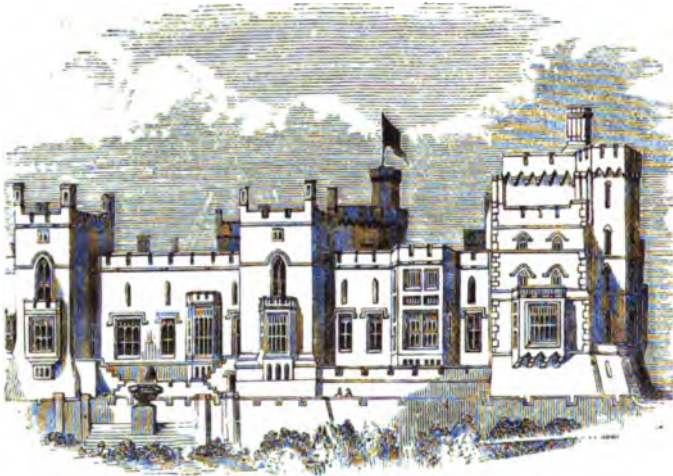
"At daybreak to-morrow we'll mount and ride for Windsor."

I took off the clerk's gown, and wrapped it carefully up.

"This garb," said I, "may serve the cause on another day"

"Not impossible," said Walter, musingly.





Windsor Castle.

## XXVII.

## THE RIDE TO WINDSOR.

I WAS, according to agreement, aroused at sunrise on Monday morning by Walter the Farrier, and, having broken our fast, both of us mounted for Windsor—he riding a black mare of marvellous swiftness, and I bestriding my gallant Harfagher, which, thanks to several days' rest and careful treatment—had quite recovered, not only from the fatigues of the journey southward, but also from the lameness which I had at first observed when chased by the wolves.

It was a fair summer's morning, and I rode along in somewhat high spirits, now dreaming of the lovely countess, with whom I easily

persuaded myself my destiny was, in some strange way, associated ; now indulging in anticipations of my interview with the prince under whose banner I hoped to advance my fortunes. For several miles of the way we met with no interruption, and, indeed, were within sight of Windsor, when, at a turn of the road, a small party of horsemen appeared in view. In close conversation, at their head rode two who attracted our whole attention. Of these, one appeared a youth in his teens, whose dress indicated high rank ; the other was a man of middle age, who wore the spurs of knighthood, and whose defiant and reckless bearing marked him as one of those warriors who carry their fortunes on the point of their spear.

" Friends or foes ?" cried the elder of the two, in a loud voice, as we approached. " For the king or De Montfort ?"

" I am a man of peaceful occupation," answered Walter, reining in his black mare, while I pulled up my gallant grey ; " and I hold not myself bound to answer questions put to me on the king's highway by men who have no right to ask them."

" Your name, good fellow," said the younger horseman. " If you are for the king, as I gather from your words, we may prove more friendly than you think."

" Maybe," replied Walter ; " but I tell not my name to all men I meet by chance, especially when I neither ask their friendship nor challenge their enmity. Nor do I think does my comrade."

" Certainly not," said I.

" We have the means of compelling you, however," broke in the first speaker, pointing to the men-at-arms, who halted at a short distance from the spot where we were.

" That will not be so easy as you fancy," said Walter ; " but, whether or no, I mislike the word ' compel,' and I say, bluntly, we will rather take our chance of a fray, two to eight as we are, than

speak one word on compulsion. Am I right?" he asked, turning to me.

"Assuredly," said I, drawing my sword.

"Come, put up your sword, youngling," said the elder of the two strangers; "there is no need of bloodshed. This is the noble baron, Henry Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, and I am Hugh Bisset, his poor kinsman."

Walter took off his hat and bent his head with great respect to the young nobleman, while I indicated my recognition of his rank in a somewhat less reverential manner.

"Now," said Bisset, the earl's kinsman, "tit for tat is fair play; so out with your names, and let us know with whom we have to deal."

"My comrade," said Walter, "is a young gentlemen of the North, whom I am teaching to ride the great horse."

"I should think he does not need any teaching how to ride the high horse," answered the other, as I sat in my saddle regarding the noble earl and his poor kinsman with that air of disdainful pride which I had learned from my grandmother.

"However," continued Walter, as if to prevent my indulging in the scornful reply that rose to my lips, "I myself am Walter the Farrier, who, by royal licence, have my forge in the Strand."

"Walter the Farrier—Walter of the Strand!" cried Bisset, his countenance lighting up. "Man, let me look at you—you of whom such tales are told; of whom it is said that never has the man lived who could strike such a blow since Cœur de Lion was laid in his father's grave at Fontevraud. And, to boot, it is passing strange that you are the very man we want."

"I am at your service, Sir Knight," replied Walter, and cautiously added, "in all things reasonable."

"Well, listen," said Bisset, as he left the earl's side, and coming close to the farrier, spoke in a low tone. "You have doubtless heard that there is about the queen a fair countess of whom all young gallants are enamoured, and with whom, beahrew me if I do not think, from all I hear, the girls will ere long fall in love. I would give you the words of the Roman poet; but hang me if I haven't forgot all the grammar that was taught me of yore by that holy man, Master John of Basingstoke."

"I believe, Sir Knight," interposed I, willing to display my scholarship, "you mean the lines about Lycidas, of whom the poet says—

"Quo calet juvenus  
Nunc omnis, et mox virgines tepebunt."

"Bravo, squire!" exclaimed Bisset, apparently a good deal surprised. "I see you have learned something more in the North than to caw like a rook, and to break the eighth commandment by moonlight."

"Yes," replied I, haughtily—for my Northern blood boiled at his words—"I have learned something more: I have learned *not* to answer a fool according to his folly."

"Bravely spoken, most bravely," said Bisset; "and in token that I forgive the satire in consideration of the humour, I offer you my hand. I see there is more in you than meets the eye, which is more than can be said of most young gallants of this day, who all look as if they had been taken too soon from their mothers. But now, farrier," he said, turning to Walter, "to our business."

"As you will, Sir Knight," said Walter.

"It happens," began Bisset, "that my Lord of Lincoln has strong claims upon the hand of the afore-mentioned countess, and relishes not the rumours that run."



"What may they be?" inquired Walter.

"Well," answered Bisset; "he has taken fright at a report that the Lord Fitz-John, being madly in love with her, has a design of carrying her off by force; and next he has conceived no slight jealousy from some story that Earl Warren has told him of a squire in the North of England rescuing her from the fangs of a boar, and of the impression that the circumstance has left on the fair one's fancy."

"And what, Sir Knight," asked Walter, "is my concern with all this?"

"I now come to that point," replied Bisset. "My Lord of Lincoln cannot be easy till he sees her again; and hearing the difficulty there might be in getting into London at this crisis, and knowing your power, we were on our way to seek you, and lo! we have found you. Therefore gain us access to London, and hold the earl your debtor for ever."

"I would serve you in anything reasonable, but not in this," said Walter, shaking his head.

"Reasonable!" exclaimed Bisset, opening his eyes. "Why use such a word where lords and earls are concerned? When a man has castles, and baronies, and retainers, he will not listen to such a thing as reason. His language, if he had the lore of this young Northern man—who seems half-squire, half-scholar—would be, '*Voluntas stet pro ratione.*'"

"Nevertheless," said Walter, "this is a matter in which I desire not to interfere; first, because I want nothing to do with the love-quarrels of young lords and earls; and next, because if I had a friend attached to the king's cause, I might mayhap strive hard to get him out of London, but not to get him into it. Know ye not that the king is shut up in the Tower, and the queen at the bishop's

palace, and that every man even suspected of favouring them is in danger of being tarred and feathered, if not more summarily dealt with ? And Londoners, credit me, are in no humour to spare men on account of their rank."

"Howbeit," said Bisset, something must be done by somebody ; and to me, farrier, it seems that thou art the man. Come," he added, coaxingly, "ride you back with us to London."

"Not now," answered Walter, decidedly, "not ere sunset ; but I see not how I can meddle with this affair."

"*Nous verrons !*" said Bisset ; and after some talk of awaiting Walter in the Strand, and some ordinary courtesies, the earl and his kinsman pursued their way in the direction of the capital, while I, musing over this queer incident, and asking a variety of questions, rode on by Walter's side towards Windsor.

Riding on, we soon caught sight of Windsor ; and I looked for the first time on the Norman stronghold on the brow of the hill, with the Thames flowing at its feet, and the banner of England floating from the highest turret, and seeming to sentinel the twelve fair countries over which it looked.

"It appears to me that in such a fortress the prince is safe, at all events," remarked I, as we rode into the little town which had risen under the castle's protection.

"It may be," replied Walter, gloomily ; "but I should be more hopeful were he at the head of twenty thousand men."

As he spoke we slowly ascended the steep that leads to the castle, and were admitted with a readiness which proved my comrade's influence. In the courtyard, however, after being informed that De Montfort had raised his banner at Oxford, we parted, Walter to visit Ferrant and Grey Lyard, I to be conducted to the prince. Having for this purpose been placed under the guidance of a page with a

crimson dress and long hair—whom I soon afterwards learned was of the great line of Courtenay, then recently dethroned and driven from Constantinople—I was conducted through several passages. At length the page opening a door drew a curtain, and announcing me by name signed to me to enter. In the chamber into which with a beating heart I stepped, two persons sat at a table playing chess. One whose face was towards me, kept his seat, and in him I immediately recognised John, Earl Warren, the young nobleman whom I had seen in the north with the king. The other, whose back was towards me, rising quickly from his seat as I entered, turned round, and I found myself face to face with Prince Edward.





Paris.

## XXVIII.

## PRINCE EDWARD.

IT would be impossible, even if I lived to the age of Methuselah, to forget the first impression produced on me by the personal appearance of Prince Edward, as, taller by the head than other tall men, he rose from the table to receive me as I entered. Even if I had never seen him since, I should perfectly recollect the face and figure of the heir of England. My countenance I knew expressed admiration, mingled with surprise. I do not think that the prince

remarked my look of wonder ; but Earl Warren did, and smiled, as if diverted.

At that time, Edward was in his twenty-fourth year, and in all the pride of early manhood ; with light brown hair that flowed crisp and curling to his mighty shoulders, a fair complexion, an ample forehead, an eye that beamed with the patriotism that glowed at his heart, and the genius that glowed in his brain ; a frame firmly knit, and admirably proportioned, and a frankness and fascination of manner which few men, not under the influence of prejudice, could easily have resisted. One defect in his aspect he had inherited from his father—his eyebrow had an oblique fall, which gave him a shade of resemblance to King Henry, whom otherwise he did not much resemble.

But, grand as was Edward's appearance at that time, and brilliant as was his intellect, I confess that he had little reputation for that knowledge of nations and affairs which subsequently made his name so great throughout Christendom.

Educated under the eye of Queen Eleanor, influenced in boyhood by his Provençal mother, the prince mingled with the sons of the land of song, the children of the sunny South. Early was he inspired by them with much of the poetry and enthusiasm, and enamoured of much of the softer side of chivalry, that, with the sternness befitting the age and position in which he lived, made him aspire, notwithstanding the stern realities of the period, to the character of a hero of romance. Brave, generous, and accomplished, he was a welcome guest in the halls of princes ; and, after espousing Eleanor of Castile, and taking knighthood from King Alphonso, he haunted tournaments on the Continent, and gave men a notion that he would have been happier if, instead of being heir to a crown, he had been a simple knight-errant.

But this view, though not altogether unreasonable, would not have been taken by any one who understood the whole of Edward's character. From the day on which he was taken to the baptismal font and called by the name which the Confessor bore, another, but a slower and more gradual, education than that which he received under Eleanor's auspices had been going on. Regarding the Confessor as his tutelary saint, and attached to Anglo-Saxon traditions, King Henry reared his son with a strong respect for that England which had disappeared after the Conquest in the eleventh century, and which was to reappear, in far more than its ancient vigour, after the Barons' War in the thirteenth. Year by year, Edward was catching the inspirations of patriotism, and, in all the wanderings of his romantic youth—when wedding Eleanor at Burgos, when taking knighthood from her brother in the chapel of Las Huelgas, when seated at the "Feast of Kings" in the old Temple at Paris, when splintering lances at continental tournaments, when visiting the Irish, and fighting with the Welsh, he was ever cherishing sentiments of nationality, and indulging in the aspiration of restoring the empire of the Bretwaldas.

Thus it happened that Edward went into the Barons' War not only as a dauntless and chivalrous warrior, but as a very ambitious and earnest politician. It was not only to fight for his prospective crown, but for the patriotic projects which possession of that crown would enable him to realize ; and it was because he had a clear idea what objects he intended to accomplish, and had infinitely stronger sympathies than his adversaries with the people on whose support the issue ultimately rested, that he came out of the struggle a conqueror.

It may be doubted whether, without his remarkable courage and prowess in battle, Edward, with all his capacity as a ruler and his

genius as a legislator, would ever have been able to cope with the enormous difficulties which beset him at the opening of his career. It was his marvellous display of skill in arms during the Barons' War, reminding men of the legendary feats of Arthur, and the heroic achievements of Richard, that elicited songs in his praise from hostile minstrels, and won the heart, by dazzling the fancy and exciting the admiration, of the multitude.

Even his horsemanship, and the celebrity of his horses, Ferrant and Grey Lyard, added his popularity at this period. Men told each other with pride, how, mounted on Ferrant, "the steed black as a raven," Sire Edward, though armed in proof, could leap over any chain, however high ; and how, when, mounted on Grey Lyard, he charged forward upon the baronial ranks, the bravest champion of oligarchy recoiled in dread and dismay.

It was by showing himself a great warrior and a great war chief that Edward acquired the privilege of proving his energy and wisdom as a great ruler in peace, of redeeming England from anarchy, of rendering the country more prosperous than ever it had been, of forming races long hostile into one great nation, of securing liberty and order by admirable laws, and of showing himself in all his doings worthy and capable of governing, not England only, but Europe.

At the time of which I write, however, Edward's position was the very reverse of enviable. On every hand were peril and perplexity. In the attempt made by the monarchy to emancipate itself from a feudalism of which it was ashamed, and associate itself with a people who seemed its natural supporters, nothing had hitherto resulted but failure. The king and queen, supported by scarcely a hundred persons of influence, were face to face with the enmity of all ranks in the kingdom ; and the prince was by no means free from the

unpopularity which the queen had caused, and which the king shared.

It is well known that when, in 1258, the Mad Parliament, at Oxford, drew up those articles known as the Provisions of Oxford, Edward was called upon to swear to observe them. After much hesitation he complied with this demand ; and having once taken an oath, he was not the man to violate it without conclusive reasons.



The Temple, N.E. side of the Temple Church

But when the twenty-four barons by their selfishness and tyranny disgusted the nation, the commons naturally complained to the prince.

“ Our lord the king,” said they, “ has done and fulfilled all and each of the things which the barons imposed on him ; while the barons have done nothing for the benefit of the commonwealth, but minded only their own interests.”

“ For my part,” answered Edward, “ I took an oath at Oxford which, though I took it against my will, I am disposed fully to keep



and to observe. But be it known to the barons, that, unless they fulfil their oaths, I will stand by the community even to the death, and compel them to perform the promises they have made."

Even when Henry, in 1261, obtained a papal bull to relieve him from his oath at Oxford, Edward, deeming that there was as yet no valid ground for breaking engagements, declined to take advantage of the dispensation. But at length the time arrived when the prince could no longer remain out of the struggle, and when, inspired by sentiments of duty and patriotism, he took the field to save the crown to which he was heir.

It was early in 1263—the year when I, Ralph Merley, left the castle of my ancestors in search of fame and fortune—and Edward was attending a tournament on the Continent, when news reached him that Llewellyn of Wales was ravaging his earldom of Chester with fire and sword. Accepting the services of a hundred French knights who offered to accompany him on the occasion, the prince hastened to England; and having driven the Welsh chief back to those mountain fastnesses which were then deemed impregnable, he marched towards London with his French knights, and took up his quarters at Clerkenwell.

At this date the prejudice against foreigners was still strong; and the presence of foreign warriors was not relished by the Londoners. In fact, the prince from having brought them into the country became highly unpopular in the city; and unhappily an incident occurred which gave the populace an excuse for manifesting their dislike.


Neither the prince who was at Clerkenwell, nor the king and queen who were at the Tower, had at that time a groat wherewith to support their households. It was necessary to take some steps to remedy this evil; and Edward, deeming strong measures expedient,

went to the Temple, and with more violence than was politic, persuaded the treasurer of the order, who had the queen's jewels in keeping, to furnish funds to meet the expenses of the royal family. Exaggerated accounts of the transaction—which, to say the least, was unfortunate—went abroad, and the Londoners rising in a mass evinced their antipathy to the prince by attacking the house of Sir John Gray, Without Ludgate ; and having forced him to fly beyond Fleet Bridge, took possession of thirty-two horses which they found in his stables. Foreseeing the possibility of being attacked, and wishing to avoid a collision, the prince mustered his force and retired to Windsor. He was there living in tolerable security, but well-nigh powerless, when I was sent thither by the queen to inform him of her peril, and to crave his assistance.



## XXIX.

## AT WINDSOR.

“ELCOME, Master Merley,” said Prince Edward, with great frankness, as he extended his hand. “Come you from the North?”

“Last week, my lord,” I answered ;  
“to-day from the city of London.”

“And wherefore?” said he, with that marvellous fascination of manner which, if I had been on the other side, I should have found exceedingly difficult to resist.

“My lord, I come partly on the business of my lady the queen, partly on my own.”

“Ah!” said he, “then, according to all the maxims of chivalry, we must take the queen’s business first ; and you and I, who are sworn disciples of chivalry, could have no excuse for neglecting its maxims.”

I drew out the queen’s ring and her letter. The prince looked carelessly at the ring, and opened the letter. After perusing it, he took several strides through the apartment, mused for a few moments, tossed back his magnificent head, and then returned.

“And now for your own business, Master Merley,” said he, almost gaily, though I perceived how Eleanor’s letter had affected

him. "Are you bent on conquering kingdoms? Which vacant throne do you covet—Jerusalem, Constantinople, or Germany? Nay, be not surprised. I have heard of your aspirings from Marmaduke Twenge, who is a gallant young gentleman, and who, I doubt not, will, like yourself, find enough of work to do in England, in the cause of your king and country, without carrying out ambitious views on kingdoms or empires beyond the sea."

"Thanks, my lord," said I, somewhat confused, but not for a moment forgetting my policy. "Marmaduke Twenge is, indeed, known in the North as a most gallant young gentleman, with lands and baronies, and can bring hundreds of retainers into the field. I have neither lands nor baronies; my property is in my sword, and I have the honour of laying it at your highness's feet;" and, unbuckling my weapon, I suited the action to the word.

"And frankly I accept it," said the prince, evidently touched; "and since I know it cannot be in the possession of any one more likely to wield it for good purposes than yourself, I restore it to you." And with marvellous grace the prince handed the weapon back to me.

"What think you of this, Warren?" asked the prince, turning to the young earl, who had witnessed the scene with interest.

"A goodly stripling," replied Warren, "whose name methinks I have heard, and whose face I have seen ere this."

"It is true, my lord," said I; "I have had the honour of being in your presence before."

"Yes," said Warren; "and let me say, Master Merley, since that is your name, and you are the squire of Prince Edward, and not mine, that I envy him such an addition to his following."

"However," said Edward, addressing Earl Warren, "let us bring this game to a conclusion, and ride into the forest to fly our hawks;

and, meanwhile, Master Merley will seat himself quietly by, and prepare to tell us how he has chanced twice to deliver a certain noble demoiselle from danger ; that is a more dangerous game than ours."

Resuming his place accordingly at the table, while I seated myself hard by, the prince proceeded with his pastime, but ever and anon turning round, without the slightest allusion to the attack on the queen, to question me as to the state of London, the doings of the demagogues, and the massacre of the Jews, in such a way as to convince me that his heart was not with the game, which ultimately terminated in Earl Warren's favour. Edward then rose suddenly from his seat, and made a step or two across the room, as if towards one of the windows which looked upon the river ; and he had hardly done so when down fell the centre stone of the groined roof, crushing to fragments the very chair from which he had risen.

"*Sang de Dieu !*" exclaimed the prince, turning round, startled and agitated, "How wondrously narrow has been my escape. And yet," he continued, gradually recovering his presence of mind, "I accept this as an omen, that, great as may be the danger that threatens us, from it I am destined to be preserved ; and mark you, John de Warren, and you, Master Merley, how Providence has in this watched over my safety. By Holy Edward !" he added, evidently much moved, "I feel more than ever—albeit I have seldom doubted it—that I am destined for something great."

"I would fain hope so," said Warren.

"I do not doubt it, my lord," said I, with a sincerity so evident that the prince turned round and looked upon me with something like gratitude in his countenance.

"Thanks, my young squire," he said, almost with emotion. "In all broad England it is something to have one person who believes

in one's destiny. But let us mount, and see how our falcons can fly. I like not being for ever cooped up in this hold, and would fain taste the fresh breeze;" and, summoning his page—the cadet of that imperial house the chiefs of which had in vain attempted to keep their seat on the throne of Constantine—the prince gave instructions for horses to be saddled and hounds unleashed.

"You will attend me, Master Merley," he said, carelessly. "I would inquire into your knowledge of falconry and venery;" and mounting one of his mettled steeds, with a hawk on his wrist and hounds running at his side, the prince, without waiting for Earl Warren, who lingered to give some instructions to the knights and gentlemen of his train, rode into the forest. Gradually, as we paced along, he drew from me the history of my boyhood, including my interview with the king, my flight with Conan de Gael, my encounter with de Montfort, and my interview with the queen, when I a second time rescued a countess in distress.

It was on this occasion that I witnessed an incident, awkward at the time, and, as I have often since thought, not altogether without mischievous consequences, which occurred hard by the place where of old stood the residence of the Anglo-Saxon kings. At that time there did exist, and perhaps does to this day, a broad trench that appeared to have surrounded the palace of timber and Roman brick. Its bed was deep, and its margin was overgrown with bushes, and willows, and long rank grass. The prince and I, riding by his side, had reached one side of this canal when Earl Warren reached the other. At that instant, as ill-luck would have it, a falcon seized a duck among the willows, and the prince, enraged at the earl for not attending to them, lost his temper.

"My lord!" he exclaimed, in a tone that could not fail to exasperate, "you remain there as if you had neither eyes nor ears."

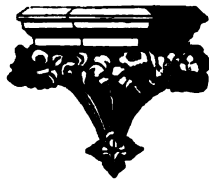
"Prince," cried Warren, flushing with rage, "it is well for you that deep water parts us."

Enraged at what he deemed a taunting aspersion on his personal courage, Edward, who at all times and seasons was too ready to display too much of that quality, set spurs to his horse, and dashing through the water at the risk of being drowned, drew his sword, and seemed prepared to attack the earl furiously. Fortunately, however, Warren, perceiving the absurdity of a quarrel under such circumstances, took off his cap, and, bending his knee, craved pardon for his hasty words.

"Forgive me for angering you, prince," said he, with a knightly grace which instantly disarmed Edward's wrath. "You often say that men of the House of Anjou have fiery tempers; and mine is not much cooler than that of the other descendants of Geoffrey Plantagenet, though my progenitor was not born in wedlock."

"True," said the prince, recovering his equanimity, and putting up his sword: "it were madness to quarrel on grounds so slight, even if the times did not demand that, for England's sake, we should be friends; wherefore let us both forget and forgive what has passed, and talk of getting my mother out of that lion's den as we wend our way homewards."

And turning their horses' heads, Edward and Warren, as if nothing unpleasant had occurred, gravely discussed Queen Eleanor's peril as they rode quietly towards Windsor.





Capture of Damietta by the Crusaders.

### XXX.

#### HUGH BISSET.

ON the day after my arrival at Windsor, I was standing in the great hall of the castle, patting the head of Prince Edward's favourite staghound, and looking on with mingled feelings of contempt and curiosity while the French knights rattled dice, and conversed gaily about love and war, when a hand was laid on my shoulder, and, turning round, I perceived Hugh Bisset, the eccentric knight with whom I had met when riding from London with Walter the Farrier.



"Pardon me, young Northman," said he, as I drew myself up with all the disdainful pride which a Merley was likely to feel at his shoulder being so profaned. "Be not offended at the freedom. It is my way with all men, save the king and the prince; and you will like me all the better for it when you come to know me."

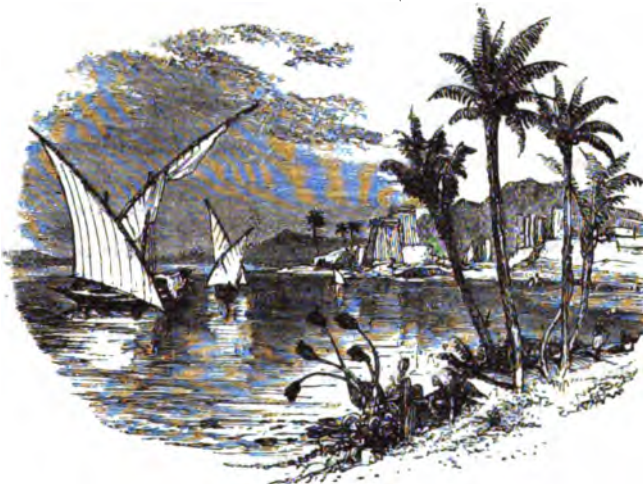
"It is possible, sir knight," said I, coldly, as I recovered my serenity, and endeavoured to express the gratification I felt at the prospect of a better acquaintance with a warrior and a scholar.

"Enough!" continued Bisset. "For the present you think me a queer fish, doubtless; and there you are right. Still, I feel that we're cut out to be friends. Mayhap I may, some day, come to esteem you, as the poet would say, '*animæ dimidium meæ*;' and, when dying on a broken shield, I may commit my last wishes to your ear. I could swear—ay, on the Evangelists—that a warm heart beats under your cold exterior; and I know it's brave, since I've heard how you bearded Simon de Montfort—'Old Sim,' as I profanely call him—at the hostelry. As for me, when you understand me you'll discover that I am a better man than many who would tell you that I'm sold to all iniquity, and warn you not to touch pitch for fear of being defiled."

A remarkable person, in truth, was Hugh Bisset; and remarkable was the career he had run. Belonging to that Norman family one of whom figured as High Forester of England early in King Henry's reign, he was, in youth, carefully instructed in grammar, trained to arms, and united to a Provençal lady who was distantly related to the queen. However, with abilities and accomplishments which might have raised him high, Bisset had an adventurous spirit which did not readily brook control; and, when he found himself a widower, with an only daughter—whom, for her mother's sake, the queen treated almost as her own child—he gave way to his impulses, and

shocked the decorous and the grave by his hardihood in defying their opinion.

As a warrior, however, Hugh Bisset ever ranked high ; and, after attending King Henry to the Continent, and signalising his prowess on that day when the warriors of England fought against fearful odds at the village of Saintonge, he took the Cross with William Longsword, Earl of Salisbury, and fared forth on the crusade which was headed by King Louis.



The Banks of the Nile.

During the expedition to Damietta, which was fruitful of so many disasters, Bisset dared all dangers. But he seemed to bear a charmed life. Escaping, by miracle, the carnage of Mansoura and the massacre of Minieh, he made his way down the Nile, and, covered with wounds, carried to Damietta intelligence that the French monarch was a captive.

Recovering from his wounds, Bisset accompanied King Louis, when freed, to Acre. But his levity of tone and disregard of pro-

priety somewhat shocked the saintly king ; and leaving Syria, he repaired to Constantinople, and fought for the Emperor Baldwin de Courtenay, who was then struggling with Greeks and Turks. Wearying of that war, he made an eccentric movement to Germany, and joining the army of the Emperor Frederick, did good service in the struggle which that potentate was maintaining against the Pope.

But, ere long, Hugh Bisset began to sigh for his native land. It was at that time that Prince Edward was gifted by the king with the principality of Wales ; and Bisset, learning that the prince was in want of stout warriors, hurried home to offer the sword which he had wielded with so much effect in so many different circumstances. But his accession to the prince's court was, on the whole, unfortunate. Indeed his recklessness did much to bring that discredit on the prince's service which made people shake their heads sadly when they thought of the future.

"The prince," said they, "keeps about his court a pack of greedy freebooters who are more daring and rapacious than any that ever appeared in the kingdom."

"Oh !" said his friends, "keeping such men about him is merely the folly of youth."

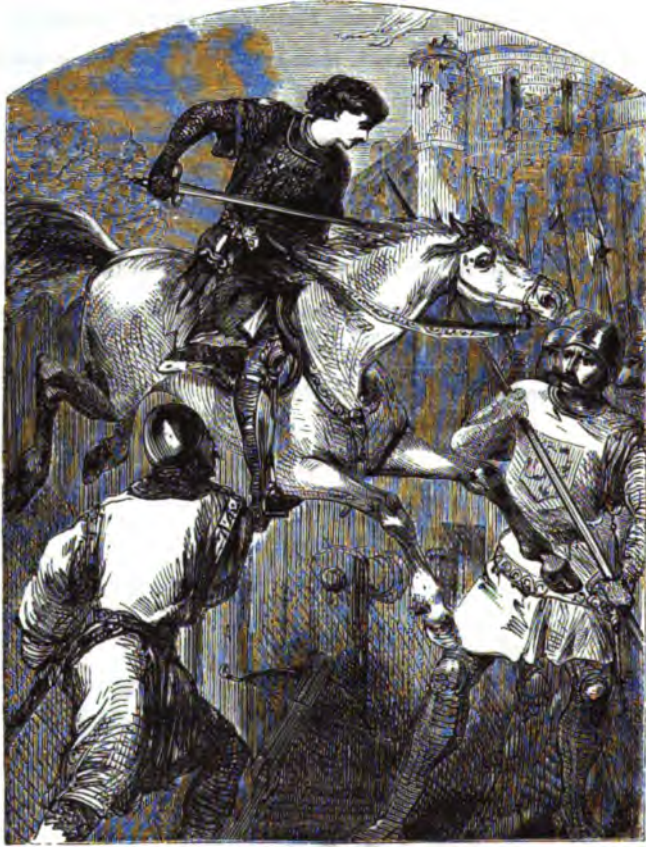
"Nay, nay !" was the reply. "If this occurs when the tree is green, what is to be expected when it is old and dry ?"

By the time I knew Hugh Bisset, however, he was somewhat sobered. In fact, his daughter, Margaret, was now a young woman of rare beauty, and he was proud of her—all the more, perhaps, that she was quite unlike himself. At the court she was known as "the holy maid." Occupied daily with the duties which devolved on her as one of the queen's ladies of honour, she had little relish for worldly vanities, but passed night after night in watching, praying,

and singing hymns of praise, with her mind's eye ever directed towards the nun's veil, and her thoughts towards the eternal vow.

I soon became aware that Hugh Bisset was influenced for good by his daughter's piety. To him it seemed that she practised so severe a sanctity to atone for the errors of his life ; and he was sobered by the reflection that his recklessness had cast a shadow over an existence which he would have wished to be bright and cheerful. It was when fortune threw him in my way that he was, perhaps, most strongly under the influence of such feelings ; for at that time the heart of "the holy maid" was more than ever bent on a convent, and it was with difficulty that the united influence of the queen and her father restrained her from the cold cloister.





Leaping the Bars of the Barriers.

### XXXI.

#### OPENING OF THE WAR.

**B**Y the time I, Ralph Merley, was installed at Windsor, the barons had drawn the sword. I have mentioned that, after my meeting with Simon de Montfort at the White Horse hostelry, the able

and ambitious earl convoked his friends at Oxford, and there, without consent of king or council, held a mock parliament. Having done so, and decided on going all lengths, he set up his standard—or, rather, the royal standard—and, freed from the influences which during the life of Richard de Clare had restrained him from rebellion, commenced in earnest the war which he hoped, perhaps, would terminate in his elevation to the throne.

A man who, during his visit to England in the previous year, had encouraged the Welsh chiefs to invade the English territories, was not likely to be scrupulous as to means ; and De Montfort was the reverse of scrupulous. Some of his adherents, however, hesitated to go all lengths. But with such men he knew how to deal, and artfully contrived to make them commit such outrages on the lands of the king and queen as to embroil them wholly in the business, and preclude the possibility of their being reconciled to the court. He thus placed them in a position scarcely less desperate than that of the comrades of William the Norman, when, after landing at Pevensey, they found that their ships were burned, and that, all retreat being cut off, they must fight not only for victory but for life.

When De Montfort—having previously taken many castles, and the towns of Gloucester and Worcester—approached London, the aspect of affairs became most alarming. In spite of Prince Edward's efforts, it was found impossible to get together an army. Indeed, so great was the power of the insurgent barons that the king's friends had not the courage to come to his support. Richard, King of the Romans, however, arrived from the West to mediate ; and, the queen and her ladies having already been safely got out of London, and escorted to Windsor, the king, to save himself from being besieged in the Tower, consented to a truce.

I ought to mention that it was stipulated, on the king's part, that the French knights who had accompanied the prince from the Continent, and who now formed part of the garrison of Windsor, should be allowed to depart the kingdom without molestation. But, much to the discredit of the baronial cause, these brave warriors, who had fought well against the Welsh, were exposed to iniquitous treatment. A proclamation was, about this time, issued against all who could not speak the English language; and the hundred knights, when conducted to the seaside by Humphrey Bohun, son of the Earl of Hereford, were, in violation of the treaty, shamefully plundered of their goods and equipages.

Meanwhile De Montfort, intoxicated with his triumph, was exhibiting little of that moderation which seemed so necessary under the circumstances. No sooner was he in possession of power than he turned Walter de Merton, the chancellor, and Philip Basset, the justiciary, out of their offices, and appointed Nicholas of Ely, a creature of his own, and Hugh Despencer, a powerful baron, in their stead. Having taken this strong measure, he held a Parliament at St. Paul's; but nothing satisfactory resulted. In truth, De Montfort's intolerance was so disgusting to many of the baronial party, that the prince, who had already drawn over Henry of Cornwall, son of the King of the Romans, to the royal side, now drew over Aimon Lestrangle, Roger Laybourne, and Roger, Lord Clifford, as well as Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk, and his brother, Hugh Bigod, who, after the "Mad Parliament" of Oxford, had for awhile figured as justiciary.

Fortune now seemed more favourable to the royal cause, and while the prince began to gather an army at Windsor, the king, accompanied by several knights and nobles, privately left Westminster, where he was not to appear, save as a captive, till that day in 1265

when, having put our enemies under our feet, we rode thither, with drums beating and banners flying, to keep the feast of St. Edward. Reaching Windsor early one morning, the king, after taking counsel with his friends, resolved on another effort to settle matters peace-



The Abbey Ruins. Reading.

fully. Accordingly a Parliament, summoned in the king's name, met at Reading, that the affairs of the kingdom might be deliberately considered without the proceedings being overawed by the Londoners. But neither De Montfort nor his adherents would attend ; and everybody, seeing that the sword must decide the quarrel, buckled on his armour.

By this time the park of Windsor was a camp ; and ere long it was decided that the king should undertake an expedition with a view of gaining possession of the castle of Dover, and that the prince should encamp near the convent of Merton, in Surrey, and there await the course of events.

Up to this time, I, Ralph Merley, had not been idle. In company with Hugh Bisset, with whom, as he had predicted, I soon formed a close friendship, I had exerted myself diligently in gathering men to



the royal standard. It was exciting work, and attended by countless adventures. In almost every village and homestead we encountered the partisans of De Montfort on the same errand as ourselves, and skirmished and fought with them to our heart's content.

One day, when viewing the ground for a camp at Merton, we were attacked by a party headed by Sir Rufus Ribaut and John Fitz-John, and under the necessity of defending ourselves against superior numbers. But Bisset, whose reckless courage made him despise odds, only laughed at the danger ; and while he couched his lance and unhorsed the mad knight, I encountered the young baron at the sword's point. After a fierce combat, I had much the better of the struggle ; and altogether our company fought so gallantly that we came off and retreated with honour.

Another day we resolved to ride to the barriers of De Clare's castle of Kingston-on-Thames, and win renown by a perilous adventure. Leaving our men at a short distance, we boldly approached the barriers, or palisades, which formed the outer fortifications. Arrived there, Bisset alighted and threw me his rein.

"Now, young Northman," said he, "hold my horse ; for we depart not hence till I have taught Gilbert de Clare's knights how the king's steel tastes in the hands of a soldier of the Cross ;" and, without the least sign of any apprehension as to the consequences, he walked close to the barriers.

"Sirs !" cried he, addressing those within, "I have come hither to prove my knighthood against yours ; and seeing, as I do, that ye will not issue from your barriers, I intend to enter ;" and, suiting the action to the word, Bisset sprang over ; and, laying about him with his huge arm, he speedily struck down two or three of his antagonists. Indeed, his valour appeared so marvellous, that the garrison, in admiration of his prowess, refrained from interfering

between him and his adversaries, and for a time allowed him to combat hand to hand with several foes. But I, losing patience, approached.

"Sir knight," I shouted, "come away. It is my turn now. You have done enough for one day."

"True," answered Bisset, cheerily; and, dealing a few strokes around him, he leaped out, armed and fatigued as he was, and vaulted on his steed.

"Adieu, sirs!" cried he, waving his hand to De Clare's knights; "I thank you! And now, Merley," he said to me, "let us begone."

"Nay, by the Holy Cross!" cried I, my blood on fire, "never shall it be told in the North that I, Ralph Merley, witnessed such deeds of prowess without trying such a jeopardy as a simple squire may;" and with a determination to do or die, I spurred my gallant grey right over the bars of the barriers, and galloping straight to the gate overthrew all who opposed. My chance of returning alive was slight. Thanks however to my gallant steed, I made good my retreat, and bruised and wounded indeed, but with my heart beating high with pride at my achievement, I cleared the barriers at a bound, and rejoined Bisset.

"You have right well acquitted yourself," said Bisset; "and now let us rejoin our company."

In truth, there was no time to lose. The garrison, enraged at my fierce onslaught, were shouting out for revenge, throwing stones, and preparing more deadly weapons, as we dashed along the pavement. Nor was the danger from the garrison the only one to which we were exposed. By this time the townsmen were fast rising, to cut off our retreat by fair means or foul; and, as we spurred along, a huge butcher, with a heavy axe, suddenly rushed at me. Escape seemed impossible. But, quick as thought, Bisset, who was behind,

grasped his mace, and, with one blow, prostrated the butcher on the ground.

"Now charge we through this rabble," he cried, pointing to the gathering crowd; and, as the words passed his lips, he with his mace, and I with my sword, riding side by side, scattered them to the right and left, and rejoined our company, who hailed our safe return with a thundering cheer.

I have briefly narrated these adventures, which, at the time, were much talked of in the king's court and camp, not to sound my own praise, but to indicate to the reader how I, young as I was, became of sufficient importance to be intrusted, at this time, with a duty which it required some courage to undertake. When the king and the prince were about to leave Windsor, one for Dover the other for Merton, I was commissioned to repair secretly to London and endeavour to gain over the capital to the royal cause.





Salisbury Cathedral

## XXXII.

## THE COUNTESS OF SALISBURY.

WHILE Windsor was the scene of preparations for war, and while I, in company with Hugh Bisset, was bringing in men to the royal standard, and performing, under his eye, feats of arms that aided in raising the spirits of the king's adherents, and daily elevated me in the opinion of the prince, my courage was stimulated and my hand strengthened by that chivalrous ardour which first love inspires, and my heart was full of the noble demoiselle with whose name I was ambitious of associating my career. I should, perhaps, in other circumstances, have never dreamt of anything but worshipping her at a distance; but I believe that, influenced by the ideas of my own importance implanted in my mind by my grandmother, I was hardly aware of the gulf that separated us. It

was a wide gulf, nevertheless ; and I dare say that, boy as I was, I should have paused in dismay had I calmly reflected on the hereditary and personal pretensions of the object of my adoration. In order to comprehend the full extent of my audacity, it is necessary to explain who was the fair being known as the Countess of Salisbury.

It is hardly necessary to tell the story of "Fair Rosamond," so often has it been sung by minstrel and ballad-maker. The daughter of Walter, Lord Clifford, she was possessed of matchless beauty, and in all respects qualified to be the wife and mother of brave men. Attracted by her charms, the second Henry, before ascending the English throne, but after he had united himself with Eleanor of Aquitaine, pretending still to be unwedded, persuaded her to a clandestine marriage, and, in 1153, she became the mother of a son afterwards widely renowned as William Longsword, Earl of Salisbury.

Eleanor of Aquitaine, however, was not free from jealousy ; and Henry, fearing for the safety of "Fair Rosamond," built her a bower at Woodstock, not unlike the Dædalian labyrinth, lest the queen should come at her, and do her harm. But, though this bower was so cunningly contrived that not even the king himself could find the way to it unless guided by a silken thread, yet the queen did—so much is the eye of jealousy quicker in discovering than the eye of care in concealing. Whether or not "Fair Rosamond" really fell a victim to the jealous rage of Eleanor of Aquitaine I cannot take upon me to say, though I greatly doubt such to have been the case ; but it is certain that she died early, and found a last resting-place in the nunnery of Godstow, near Oxford.

But the name of Rosamond Clifford was not destined to perish. William Longsword, her son by King Henry, as he grew to man-

---

hood, won renown as one of the foremost warriors of his generation. Gifted by his father with the earldom of Salisbury, and united in marriage to Hela Devereux, heiress of that great Norman family, he died, in 1226, leaving a son, named William, who, after becoming, as second earl of Salisbury, more famous than even his sire had been, accompanied Louis, King of France, to the crusades, and fell bravely at Mansoura, after having slain a hundred Saracens with his own hand.

Meanwhile Hela Devereux, widow of the first William Longsword, being a woman of remarkable piety, had become Abbess of Lacock, a religious house which she herself had founded. When informed of the death of her son, she, with a cheerful spirit, clasped her hands, and, bending her knees, expressed her thanks to Heaven for being the mother of a warrior honoured with the crown of martyrdom. "I hope, by his intercession," she added, "I shall soon be advanced to the glories of the heavenly kingdom."

Before going to the crusades, the second Earl of Salisbury espoused Idonea, daughter of Richard de Camville, and by her he left a son of his own name. Brave and promising was this third William Longsword, and high was the popularity he inherited. But he was destined to a melancholy fate and an early grave. At a tournament held at Blithe, about Whitsuntide, 1256, where Prince Edward, recently knighted by the King of Castile, attended in linen clothing and light armour to be instructed in the laws of chivalry, William Longsword, then in the prime of life, after greatly exerting himself, was unhorsed, trampled under foot, and much bruised. From the accident he never recovered. About Christmas, 1257, he breathed his last, leaving, by his wife, Maude, daughter of Walter, Lord Clifford, an only daughter and only child, Margaret, Countess of Salisbury.

I have said that the face of the Countess of Salisbury might have turned an older and wiser head than mine. She had light hair, blue eyes, and a fair complexion—so fair, indeed, that it might almost be said of her, as of her celebrated ancestress, that the blood could be seen to flow through her veins. But what made her so fascinating that few could resist her charms was that sweet and tender languish which proceeds from the upper eyelid being finely arched, and the lower eyelid nearly straight, and partly covering the pupil of the eye, full and richly blue. In a court where lovely demoiselles abounded, she had no rival; and it was natural that her youth, her beauty, her rank, and her possessions, should bring around her a host of admirers.

Of all the young countess's admirers, I believe that I, Ralph Merley, was the most ardent. But it was not so much the youth, beauty, rank, or possessions of the woman that caught my fancy, as her pedigree. There was the true attraction. In her ancestry there was romance, valour, piety; and around her name there clustered such a halo of associations as could hardly, under the circumstances, fail to captivate the imagination of a stripling who had passed so much time in dreaming of adventures that might make his name great among men.

From the first, the king showed me cold countenance. I was not surprised at this; for he disliked my father's memory, and did not forget my juvenile outrage at Oxford. Besides, Conan de Gael, who hated me with all his heart, soon arrived from the North, and doubtless the Breton, who had the king's ear, did all he could to keep alive the king's antipathy. But with the queen I was in high favour. Nothing, indeed, could have exceeded the royal lady's condescension and kindness to the squire who had carried her message from the bishop's palace to Windsor. She called me her

young clerk, frequently availed herself of my clerklly skill, and even took some pains to teach me the soft and musical language of her native Provence—the land of roses and song.

Had I, at that period, known the whole circumstances of my parentage, I should, perhaps, have ruined myself by some mad attempt. As it was, my imagination had quite got the better of my reason, and I perpetually delighted my soul with visions of a matrimonial triumph that was to satisfy my heart and my ambition, and astonish my baronial kinsman, Roger Merley de Merley. I even flattered myself that the fair countess was the reverse of indifferent ; for, on such occasions as the queen commanded my services, I did not altogether neglect the opportunity of making myself agreeable to the demoiselle whom I had twice rescued from danger. Moreover, I could not help thinking that such advances as I ventured to make, and some talk which I indulged in as to unequal matches, when the queen related how a knight of Provence aspired to marry her sister, afterwards Countess of Anjou, while evidently diverting to the wife of King Henry, were the reverse of displeasing or distasteful to the heiress of the Longswords.

“And so it seems, Master Merley,” remarked the queen, laughing, “that you, albeit a simple squire, would deem yourself quite qualified to aspire to the hand even of so high a demoiselle, for instance, as my kinswoman, Margaret of Salisbury ?”

“Madam,” replied I, colouring deeply, and much confused, but resolute not even at such a moment to lower my pretensions, “Reginald de Chatillon married the heiress of the Princess of Antioch, and John de Brienne married the heiress of the Kings of Jerusalem. Both were ladies of very exalted rank. Yet neither Reginald de Chatillon nor John de Brienne could for a moment be compared, as regards purity of blood and lineage, with a Merley,



whose male ancestors sailed up the Seine with Rollo, and whose ancestors, in the female line, were Kings of England and Earls of Northumberland."

"And what say you to that, Margaret?" asked the queen, looking towards the countess.

"I suppose I ought not to have an opinion on such a subject," replied the countess, in a voice tremulous with agitation; "but, if I were allowed to have one, I should say there can be no great harm done when the heart and hand go together."

After this scene, I daily became more foolishly enamoured. Often, often I asked myself if I would not rather die a hundred times for her than live without her, and as often my heart answered, "Yes."

At length I resolved to seize the first opportunity of speaking somewhat plainly; and, when I began to despair, accident threw an opportunity in my way.

It was the day on which the king was departing for Dover, and great was the confusion at Windsor. Men ran hither and thither; horses rushed against each other; waggon overturned waggon; and the whole seemed an intolerable jumble of horse and foot till the prince appeared, and, with a rapid dexterity which excited my admiration, formed them into marching order. Not having anything to do with this operation, and not being in a humour to mingle with the crowd, I went to view the king's departure from a part of the ramparts which I had frequently availed myself of when in a musing mood, and generally found deserted. On the present occasion, however, such was not the case. In fact, I speedily became aware that I was in the presence of the Countess of Salisbury and two of her gentlewomen.

I was somewhat taken by surprise, and was about to turn away;

but the prince's favourite staghound, of which I had made a friend, having followed me to the ramparts, happened to frighten a dog with which the countess had been presented by her mother, and, finding it necessary to interfere, I thought the occasion not to be neglected.

"Now," said I to myself, "fortune and the occasion befriend me. Nothing but courage on my part is wanting." And, having called off the staghound, I made a desperate effort, and advanced.

I have never forgotten the agitation of that moment. I was, however, resolute. I was determined to tell all my hopes and fears—and I believe I did. My recollection of the interview has always been vague and indistinct. But I well remember that I succeeded so far beyond my anticipations, that I have since been at times inclined to consider the whole affair a dream.

In the afternoon of next day I mounted and took the road with Hugh Bisset, who commanded the van of the prince's army. As we separated—he to encamp at Merton, and I to pursue my way to London—he took my hand, and looked kindly in my face.

"Young Northman," said he, "we have fought side by side in some little frays, and may live to fight side by side in pitched battles."

"I should be proud and pleased," I replied, "to fight on some glorious day by the side of a warrior whose prowess and courage I so much admire."

"In the meantime," said he, "let me ask a blunt question. Is it true, as some of the young gallants say, that you are in love, and that you love above your rank?"

"And if I say 'Yes,' " I replied, colouring, "who shall gainsay my right to carry the homage of my heart where my inclination prompts?"

"Not I, believe me," said Bisset, kindly ; "but you are young and sanguine ; and, speaking as your father might have spoken had he been alive, I would say, 'Beware how you cherish delusions which may make many a future year a year of misery.' "

"Thanks for the warning," said I ; "but you, at least, will look lightly on my error, for who has told me oftener than you that it is human to err ?"

"True, true," cried Bisset, taken somewhat aback. "I have learned that to my cost. I could not, in youth, read the riddle of life, and I was, in consequence, ruined. Gad's my life, if that does not remind me of the fable of the Sphinx with the face and bosom of a goddess and the body of a lioness. You know how she sat by the wayside, propounding her riddles to the passers-by ?"

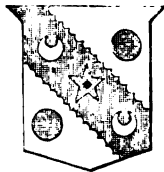
"Yes," I replied ; "and if they could not answer, she destroyed them."

"And fear not you the Sphinx, Master Merley ?" he asked, more gravely.

"Not a whit," I answered ; "for I believe I can read the riddle."

"Youth is ever confident ; and I deem not the less of you that you have faith in yourself," said Bisset. "Beshrew me if, when I was your age, I would not have undertaken more readily than Phaeton did to drive the chariot of the Sun."

And we parted.





Ancient Smithfield.

## XXXIII.

## THE PLOT OF JOHN DE GIZORS.

I WILL not take upon me to say that I, Ralph Merley, was not, in some sense, the author of that plot associated with the name of John de Gizors ; but I protest, as I have ever protested, against being held responsible for the circumstances that caused the catastrophe with which it terminated. It was, in reality, the king's aversion to me, and his distrust of me, that led to failure. My part in the affair I intend frankly and faithfully to relate.

During the few days I passed in London, during the summer of 1263, I failed not to perceive that, among the more wise and prudent of the citizens, there was a party wholly averse to setting

aside the royal authority ; and, in my conversations with Walter the Farrier and John de Gizors, the armourer, I came to the conclusion that it only required courage and resolution to turn the influence of this party to account. Moreover, I flattered myself that my father's name was still of sufficient account with the populace to ensure me a hearing in any case of emergency, and I hardly doubted my ability, under favourable circumstances, reared and educated as I had been, so to deal with the passions and prejudices of the multitude as to enlist them on the king's side. The prince not only approved of the plans which, with this view, I had formed, but prevailed on the king to give them his sanction ; and, thus armed with authority, I reached the capital with a determination to dare all in the attempt to do something likely to serve the royal cause and make my name known to fame.

I took up my residence at the house of Walter the Farrier—that house in the Strand which I have already described—and, exchanging my martial attire for the clerk's gown which I had borrowed from Matthew Beke, when escaping from the Bishop's palace, I went calmly and cautiously to work. Going about the city as a scholar of Oxford, I was not only safe, but treated with honour by the Batchellors, owing to the zeal which the Oxford scholars displayed for the baronial cause. Even Stephen Fitz-Scrob and Oscar the Scot, albeit indulging in suspicions, failed to penetrate my disguise ; and, with the aid of John de Gizors, I was enabled to sound many of the wiser and more substantial citizens. I soon found that my anticipations were, in part, at least, likely to be realised ; and that, startled by the lawless proceedings of the multitude, and alarmed at the probability of still worse atrocities, men of prudence and experience were inclined to hazard much in order to restore and maintain the royal authority.

At this stage of affairs, indeed, it appeared that London, if united, would almost have been in a position to decide the struggle. Outside of the walls, Henry was trying to baffle De Montfort, and the earl was closely watching the movements of the king. When the royal army sat down before Dover, De Montfort raised a force to relieve the place, if besieged ; and when Henry, disappointed by Sir Richard Grey's obstinate refusal to surrender, abandoned his attempt, and marched back to London, the earl followed fast to prevent him from entering the city.

But Henry reached Southwark before his formidable foe ; and within the walls of London a violent contest took place. The loyal citizens, mostly wise and discreet men, strongly insisted on admitting the king ; but the populace, encouraged by Thomas Fitz-Richard, the mayor, resolutely objected. Loud was the clamour ; terrible were the threats ; and mighty was the uproar.

"Now," said I to John de Gizors, "is the time for me to interfere."

"Nay," replied the armourer, in a conclusive tone. "I know the mob better than you. If you spoke with the tongue of an angel, but spoke against their prejudices, they would not listen. Certain it is that the king cannot enter now. Whatever is to be done for his cause must be done by stratagem."

"Then," said I, "to stratagem let us have recourse."

Finding that he could not gain entrance into London, Henry drew his forces somewhat back, so as to have the means of easy communication with the prince, who was still at Merton ; and De Montfort encamped at Southwark, between London Bridge and the royal camp, and intimated his resolution, at all hazards, to prevent the king from entering the city. The earl, however, was not quite at his ease ; for his army, though superior to the king's, was not likely

to be victorious if matched against the united forces of the king and the prince. Indeed, it was believed that, in such a case, defeat was inevitable. It was under such circumstances that I suggested and that John de Gizors adopted the project of shutting De Montfort out of London, and placing him in such a position that Henry and Edward would be enabled to force him to fight.

The project appeared so simple and so easy of execution, if proper precautions were taken, that the citizens, who were privately consulted, agreed to take part in bringing it to an issue ; and John de Gizors having contrived to open communications on the subject with the king and the prince, the affair looked so promising that the men engaged in it chuckled over the prospect of terminating the war at a blow.

It happened that the horse races frequently held at Smithfield were on the point of taking place, and, notwithstanding the state of national affairs, no doubt was entertained that the populace would flock thither to witness the sport. The opportunity seemed much too favourable to be neglected, and it was agreed to seize the occasion to execute the project.

All arrangements were now made for the purpose. The bridge was to be taken possession of ; the chains were to be drawn across ; the keys were to be flung into the river ; and I, at the head of a body of citizens, who were to arm secretly, was to take my post at the end of the bridge, and, by force of hand, prevent any attempt on the part of the populace to render assistance to De Montfort, either by going to his rescue or by forcing open the gate to afford him refuge when attacked by the royalist forces.

Every preparation connected with the plot was so cautiously made, and everything connected with it kept so profoundly secret, that I already rejoiced in the certainty of success, and could scarcely

repress my exultation. But I was destined to learn that there is much between the cup and the lip, and destined also, I believe, to profit by the somewhat severe lesson I received.

On the evening of the day before that on which the enterprise was to be attempted, I, disguised as a clerk, had a long interview with John de Gizors, at his house in the Poultry. I could not help thinking that the armourer treated me with less confidence than was his wont ; but I made no remark on that subject, and asked for no explanation. As I was on the point of leaving the house, however, I was somewhat dismayed to encounter on the threshold my old enemy, Conan de Gael. I gave no sign of recognition, but he evidently recognised me, and eyed me with the malevolence of one who cherishes a deadly hate, and seeks a mortal revenge.

Much wondering at the presence of De Gael in London, and in the house of John de Gizors, I walked through the streets, passed through Ludgate, and, reaching the Strand, hastened to Walter the Farrier.

"Good Walter," asked I, "know you on what errand Conan de Gael, the Breton, goes to the house of John de Gizors?"

"It seems," answered the farrier, "that he is employed by the king to communicate with John about the plot."

"Ho! ho!" I exclaimed, much mortified, "is the king anxious to spoil all, that he sends this Breton to interfere? Methinks we should be the better for the filthy fellow's absence."

"Assuredly," replied Walter, "I much dislike his meddling in the business ; but I would fain hope no mischief will come of it."

"I fear me he is likely to do more harm than good," said I, gravely ; "but let us at least hope that it may prove otherwise."





Merley reaches Gamei Goodrick's Hostelry.

#### XXXIV.

#### GOING THROUGH FIRE AND WATER.

**I**T was a day in the autumn of 1263—one of those autumnal days in which the sun still shines brightly—and the populace of London, forgetting, in their excitement, the quarrel of king and

barons, flocked gaily to Smithfield to witness the races. I need not say how the course was cleared ; how hackneys and war-steeds were mounted ; how, as they started, spurs were clapped to their sides and whips brandished ; and how they cleared the ground amid the shouts and cheers of the spectators. Under other circumstances I should have been foremost among those who rushed to enjoy the spectacle. On this occasion, however, I was wholly occupied with weightier matters, and my mind was bent on executing the project on the success or failure of which so much seemed to depend.

From an early hour, I, seated in the Guest-hall of the farrier's house, or gazing restlessly from the square tower at an angle of the building, ever and anon received intelligence as to the movements of the armies ; and from the time that the prince was reported to have begun his march from Merton, I was in a state of feverish suspense, and eagerly awaited the return of Walter the Farrier to announce that it was time to gain possession of the bridge. Every precaution had been taken. The warder and sentinel of Ludgate were bribed to pass me through ; my grey charger was in the stable of John de Gizors, ready to bear me to the scene of action ; my war-like habiliments had replaced the scholar's garb ; and I was, with juvenile vanity, trying on my scarlet mantle, and thinking what a heroic figure I should cut at the head of the loyal citizens, when suddenly, pale and agitated, Walter rushed into the chamber and grasped my arm.

"Fly !" he exclaimed, unable, at first, to muster breath to say more.

"Fly !" said I ; "and wherefore ?"

"Because," he replied, "we are betrayed—betrayed by the Breton. Hundreds of the mob, headed by Stephen Fitz-Scrob and Oscar the Scot, are now breaking open the gate of the bridge, to go to De

Montfort's succour ; and hundreds more, headed by the Breton and Sir Rufus Ribaut, are on their way hither to carry your head on a spear to De Montfort. Fly ! My black gelding is swift as the wind ; he awaits you below. Mount, and ride for life."

"And leave you to their vengeance," said I. "Never !"

"Hark," said Walter. "I am in little danger if you go. Stephen Buckerel can save me, but he cannot save both you and me ; and, if you stay, mayhap he can save neither you nor me."

"That alters the case," said I, buckling on my sword ; "but whither can I ride ? Between me and the royal army flows the deep river, and I cannot expect your horse to take to the water like a wild duck."

As I spoke I looked northward from the casement on the rising ground—on pastures where cattle grazed, and fields from which the harvest had been gathered—that lay between the Strand and the vast forest of Middlesex ; and, as I did so, I thought of the "White Horse" hostelry, and Gamel Goodrick.

"Yea," said Walter, eagerly, as he guessed my thought ; "you are right. Gamel wished our plot success ; and he has places in the old hostelry in which he could hide a man from the search of half an army. The country is somewhat disturbed, it is true ; for it seems that fifty armed men have made their way into the nunnery of Giles du Bois, near St. Alban's, and that the rustics have risen and chased them towards London ; and there is some talk of the wood being on fire. But all that may favour your escape ; so horse and away, Master Merley, and may we both live to meet in better days !"

By this time the shouts of the approaching mob were distinctly audible ; and I hesitated no longer. Descending to the courtyard, where stood the farrier's black gelding, I sprang into the saddle.

While Walter opened the heavy gate, I drew my sword ; and, while the mob were shouting, " Where is this abettor of oppressors ? Where is this Merley ? " I dashed through the opening, and, as the gate closed behind, shouted, " Here, miserable dupes, in the midst of you ! " And, with my sword flashing and doing terrible execution, I spurred through the midst of the crowd, no longer essaying to arrest my progress, but recoiling before my fierce and desperate charge.

But my peril was still great. As I cleared the crowd, a score or more of horsemen—among whom I could recognise the voices of Sir Rufus Ribaut, shouting that I was no mortal, but Walter Merley, returned from another world, and Conan de Gael, rejoicing in the thought that his revenge was secure—spurred forward to intercept me. Not a moment, however, did I lose. With all the equestrian dexterity of which I was master, I guided the farrier's gelding towards the fields, and, with my pursuers close on my track, rode northward with a speed which promised safety.

I soon found, however, that my chance of escape was uncertain ; for, in one respect, my pursuers had a decided advantage. In fact, they were familiar with the ground, while my acquaintance with it was slight ; and, what with reining in to ascertain where I was going, and making circuits to set myself right, while they came on straight as an arrow from a bow, I found, in spite of the superior swiftness of the black gelding, that it was only by slow degrees that I increased the distance between us. Even after I had for miles been skirting the forest, and exercising all my powers of memory to recall the locality as it had appeared to me on the day I travelled from the " White Horse " to London, I still heard the tramp of their horses, and still their shouts and execrations rang in my ears.

At this stage, however, I found myself face to face with a new

danger. I had scarcely listened when Walter the Farrier spoke of robbers hunted by rustics, and of a wood having been set on fire. I was, therefore, amazed in the extreme, when, on reaching a place where the wood formed a semicircle, I found myself with smoke and flame in front and enemies thirsting for my blood pressing me close in the rear. Indeed, there was not the fourth of a mile between us ; and, as every chance of escape seemed gone, they uttered a yell of triumph which made my blood boil, and almost made me wish that I had perished with my brave sire in the waves of the blue sea.

It was in such a frame of mind that a desperate resolution took possession of me. Before me was a semicircle of fire ; behind me a score of mortal foes, of whom my pride said loudly that it would be degrading to die by their hands, more degrading still to be their captive. I remembered that, as a child, I had been saved by Providence from the sea ; I thought that, as a man, I might be saved by Providence from the flames. Anyhow, looking towards that semicircle of fire, I determined to take my chance of forcing my way through it alive. Nor did I hesitate as to the method. Necessity is said to be the mother of invention ; and, leaping from my saddle, I, quick as thought, tore my red mantle in two pieces. In one I enveloped the head of my horse, in the other I enveloped my own face ; and, having mounted ere blindfolding myself, I uttered a shout of defiance which sounded loud above the yells of my pursuers, and, with a shake of the rein and a touch of the spur, charged right into the fire.

Vain would it be for me to attempt to describe all that I felt at that moment ; but I believe the feeling uppermost was one of triumph. It is true that the heat was terrific ; that I heard my hair singeing, and that I felt that my body was being roasted ; but I

believed, as I went on in utter darkness, that I had baffled my pursuers ; and so high was my pride, that I would rather have died a hundred cruel deaths than have fallen into their hands.

Ere long I found that I was saved, not only from what I abhorred as the last degradation, but also from perishing in the flames. Suddenly, when both horse and rider were all but exhausted, I felt the fresh air, and, tearing the scorched covering from my face, sprang to the ground and freed the gelding's head. I saw I was safe from further pursuit ; but the horse was exhausted, and so burnt that I could not hesitate what to do. I felt a pang, it is true, but my hand was firm, as I drew my dagger, and, covering his eyes with my hand, relieved him from an existence which was evidently intolerable.

The gelding disposed of, I began to feel intense thirst, and looked around for water. This I had not far to seek. Before me lay a huge pool ; and, without caring for the consequences, I threw myself from the bank, and derived unspeakable relief as I felt the refreshing influence. How long I remained there, or how I lost consciousness, I cannot tell. In fact, the shades of evening were beginning to fall when I recovered my senses, and found myself stretched on the margin of the pond.

Some minutes elapsed before I could so arrange my ideas as to remember how I came there. At length I contrived to recall the events of the day, and to consider where I was to pass the night. I rose to my feet with the determination to find my way, if possible, to the "White Horse" hostelry, and I almost miraculously succeeded. It was near midnight, however, when I reached the place and knocked loudly at the gate.

"Who is there?" asked a voice, which I recognised as that of Gamel Goodrick.

"Open," said I, faintly; for by this time I could scarcely stand.

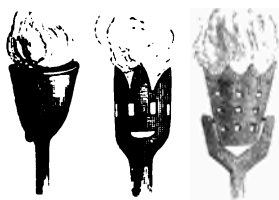
"Friend or foe?" asked mine host.

"A Merley," answered I, making my last effort to speak, as I felt my limbs fail me, and clutched at the lintel.

"A Merley!" exclaimed Gamel Goodrick, as he opened the door. "What, my Lord Ralph, and in such a guise! What can have happened? Is all lost?"

"All is lost," replied I; "and I have come hither to ask you to save me from men who have sworn to have my head. Let me die any death—slay me yourself—rather than allow me to fall into their hands."

As I spoke, and as Gamel Goodrick raised his voice to summon his wife, I sank down exhausted with fatigue and excitement; and I remember no more.





Amiens Cathedral.

## XXXV.

## MY RECOVERY.

MANY days passed after my arrival at the "White Horse" ere I, Ralph Merley, recovered consciousness, and, when I did, I had forgotten all that had passed since I left the castle of my kinsman and the banks of the Wansbeck. In truth, I believed that I was still in that northern stronghold, hard by that clear stream, and, on looking round, was surprised to find myself in a strange chamber and among unfamiliar objects.

In my perplexity I raised my right hand to my head, and discovered, I confess not without horror, that the fair curling locks which



had been my grandmother's pride were gone. In my restlessness, I made an effort to turn on my couch, and I discovered, with pain, that I was reduced to the last degree of weakness. Gradually, as I moved, the events of the last few months came to my memory, but so indistinctly that I asked myself, "Is this a feverish dream, or is it not?"

Much perplexed, my curiosity to learn something definite became overpowering. Resolved at all hazards to gratify it, I attempted to rise. At the first step I was convinced of my imprudence. At the second step I grew faint, and fell heavily on the floor. Days elapsed before I again awoke to consciousness. When I did so, I had less difficulty in making out by whose roof I was sheltered. Gamel Goodrick, his honest northern face beaming with joy, stood by my couch; and, as he took my emaciated hand in his huge fist, tears ran down his rough cheeks.

"And so, my Lord Ralph, you have now come to yourself," said he. "Blessed be God! for life is sweet; and, as my wife says, you should value yours the more, seeing that you have had a hard struggle to keep it."

"How fares Walter the Farrier?" asked I. "What suffered he at the hands of that deluded populace?"

"Nought to speak of," answered Gamel Goodrick. "True, the rabble wrought some little mischief about his house; but Stephen Buckerel stood Walter's friend, and Wat came off scot-free."

"And John de Gizors?" I asked; "what of him, good Gamel?"

"Truth to tell," was the answer, "the mob, and especially the Batchellors, were like to have been hard on John de Gizors and some other citizens; but, as there were rumours of a truce, they got off in the end with a heavy fine, to be applied to strengthening the chains and gates of the city."

I strove to put further questions ; but the slight exertion I had made had so exhausted me that I sank into a slumber. From that time, for weeks, I experienced no curiosity. Indeed, I felt a total indifference as to myself and others. About one person only I desired to know—about her whose fair face haunted me in my visions by day and my dreams by night.

But I was recovering, though slowly ; and, albeit I spoke little, I in time began to display an appetite which made Gamel Goodrick's spouse pronounce that there was much life in me yet. I was just beginning to feel anxious to know what was passing in the world, in which I had for a season played a part, when one day I was roused by the entrance of a visitor. I looked up as the door opened ; and my spirits instantly rose as I perceived that it was Hugh Bisset.

"Young Northman," said the knight, with his devil-may-care manner, "I give you joy of your escape from sword and fire, and of being in so fair a way of regaining health and strength."

"But with every hope and aspiration gone," said I, mournfully.

"Be patient," said Bisset. "Spring brings back the flowers—spring will restore your hopes and aspirations ; and you will live to read the Sphinx's riddle yet."

I smiled, but shook my head somewhat sadly, as I remembered the conversation to which he referred.

"And so," he continued, "you contrived to give Sir Rufus Ribaut and Conan de Gael—accursed be the traitor !—the slip in a way that made them marvel, and others talk ?"

"Doubtless," said I.

"Yes, on my faith ! The mad knight pronounced you no man born of woman, but a fiend in your father's likeness ; and the Breton and the others, being less superstitious, concluded that you and the black gelding were burned to ashes. Well, I have done daring things

in my time ; but a ride through fire—and such a fire !—is what I never accomplished, and never should have dreamt of attempting. God's truth ! I should as soon have attempted the passage of that narrow bridge—made, I believe, of a hair—which Mahometans imagine they must cross to get to Paradise.”

“ But,” asked I, to whom the conversation brought such disagreeable reminiscences that I was willing to change the subject, “ how ended the matter as regarded the king, and the prince, and De Montfort ?”

“ Little to my liking,” replied Bisset. “ We were marching fast from Merton to join the king and crush De Montfort, when up spurred a messenger with word that there was a screw loose, and that the Batchellors and crowds of citizens were pouring over the bridge to old Sim's support ; and soon up spurred another messenger with orders to beat a retreat. Presently we heard that De Montfort had given the citizens white crosses to put on their breasts, to make the strife seem a Holy War, and that he was leading them into the fields near Lambeth. The prince would fain have fought ; but the king said, ‘ No—peace is still possible.’ ”

“ And so, as I understand it, no battle took place ?”

“ No ; it ended in a truce, both parties agreeing to leave their differences to the King of France. At Amiens a great conference is to be held ; and thither have gone the king, the queen, and the two princes. But, before leaving Windsor, the king, speaking of the peril incurred by John de Gizors and others, owing to the failure of the plot, expressed his admiration of you in very high terms, as a young squire of great promise ; and the prince, being present, charged me to seek you out and assure you that neither your services nor your interests should be forgotten.”

“ I am grateful to the king and the prince for being so conside-

rate," said I. "But pray tell me of the queen and of those fair nymphs—the ladies of her court."



Lambeth Palace

"It is of the Countess of Salisbury you would ask," said Bisset, laughing. "Well, to humour you, I will tell you that she, with the others—my daughter among the rest—have accompanied the queen ; and so, I may add for your comfort, has my noble kinsman, Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln."

I felt strongly inclined to give vent to my anger by wishing Bisset's noble kinsman in the worst of all places. But I refrained.

"I will wager, boy," continued Bisset, half in jest half in earnest, "that, in your solitude, you have thought more of this young countess than of those adventures that may yet lead you to fortune ; so true it is that love among the passions, as oil among liquors, ever rises to the top ; and yet, pardon me for telling your father's son—for telling you, young Northman—that, fancy what you will, and do what you may, you have no more chance of ever gaining the maiden than you would have of finding the Sangreal if you went in quest of it, like

the Knights of the Round table ; and," added the knight, in a melancholy tone, "if you could win her you would not be happy ; for there is nothing that can bring happiness on this side of the grave ; 'all,' as my daughter says, 'is vanity and vexation of spirit.'"

"You speak," I remarked, "like a man weary of this life."

"No," said Bisset, "I am not weary of life, and I am so little discontented with my condition, that, had I been present when the Latin poet asked how it was that nobody lived content with his lot, I should have disputed the assertion. True, I have no gold and little land ; but what of that ? Kokben Abraham was the wealthiest man in London, and it cost him his life. Gilbert de Clare has more land than any man in England, and he frets and fumes daily. I covet not riches. Midas longed for riches, and the gods granted him his wish and a pair of ass's ears into the bargain. No, I am not weary of life, nor dissatisfied with my lot ; but, truth to tell, I have sometimes of late had a notion that my days are numbered ; and, seeing that my daughter is more than ever bent on the cloister, I care more how than when I die."

"And how would you wish to die ?"

"Where but in battle ?" exclaimed Bisset. "Like Siward, the Danish Earl of Northumberland, I should not like to die in bed, huddled up like a cow, but on some well-foughten field, waving my sword in my hand, and shouting 'Victory !'"

"And such fields you will live to see, ere long, in England."

"I doubt it ; for men who have aught to lose are loth to push matters to extremities ; and King Henry is so pacific that he will endure much rather than be responsible for bloodshed. Besides, to tell the truth," he added, "I see not where the king is to raise an army sufficient to cope with that which De Montfort and his friends can bring into the field."

"But I do see," said I, "and that clearly. Beyond the Trent and the Humber are barons of great name—Nevilles and Percies, Bruces and Baliols, not to mention Marmaduke Twenge and my kinaman, Roger Merley de Merley, who, if urged, would bring their fighting men to support the royal cause. At all events, and whether you prepare for the worst or not, I venture to predict that, in spite of truces, and conferences, and arbitrations, ere another harvest is ready for the sickle—mayhap ere seed-time—there will be war."

"Wherefore think you so?"

"Because there are two men in England neither of whom could brook the other's sway. Simon de Montfort will not rest till he rules England. Henry might suffer much—even to be deposed as the heirs of Clovis were deposed from the throne of France by Pepin le Bref, and as the heirs of Pepin and Charlemagne were deposed by Hugh Capet. But Edward never will, save as a captive, submit to De Montfort's supremacy."

"Never."

"Well, suppose him a captive: think you any prison in England could long hold the prince? Assuredly not. Ere a year elapsed he would free himself."

"And what then?"

"Why, see you not that in his absence people would learn his value, and, with the national sympathies on his side, he would come forth to conquer. He would rally the country to his standard; and he would crush De Montfort as a potter's vessel."

"May I live to see the day!" said Bisset, with enthusiasm; "and then," added he, gravely, "I will die, if not happy, at least contented."



Gloucester Cathedral.

## XXXVI.

## EVENTS OF THE WINTER.

**W**HILE I was passing the winter at the sign of the "White Horse," and gradually, under the care of Gamel Goodrick and his spouse, recovering my strength, events of great importance were occurring.

At Amiens, early in January, 1264, Louis, King of France—still bearing on his brow traces of the multiplied sorrows and disasters he had endured when in the East—kept his court ; and thither, to refer their differences to the saintly monarch, repaired King Henry and Prince Edward. Simon de Montfort intended to appear at the conference ; but on the way the aspiring earl met with an accident which forced him to return to Kenilworth ; and the baronial cause was represented by deputies, among whom were Humphrey Bohun the younger, and Peter and Henry de Montfort—all zealous partisans.

After patiently hearing both sides, Louis, on the 3rd of February, in presence of the prelates and nobles of France, solemnly gave his decision. While entirely annulling the Provisions of Oxford, he confirmed the Great Charter which King John had granted to the community at large at Runnymede ; and, at the same time, the pious and praiseworthy man, with regal dignity, recommended both parties to exercise forgiveness and to make concessions, to show good-will, and to live together in unity and peace.

The barons received the award of the King of France with indignation, and utterly refused to abide by the decision. Alleging that Louis had, as arbitrator, exceeded his powers, De Montfort took possession of London ; and Prince Edward, returning from the continent, whence he brought his admirable wife, Eleanor of Castile, fortified himself in Hereford. Ere long, Henry, leaving the queen and Prince Edmund in France, reached England ; and, every hope of peace dying fast in men's hearts, both parties flew to arms.

It happened that at this time Robert Neville, Lord of Raby, who was descended in the male line from the same Anglo-Saxon progenitor as my grandmother, and who was, therefore, my distant kinsman, was captain-general for the king beyond the Trent ; and he advised Henry to summon the Bruces, Baliols, Percies, and other northern barons to fight for the crown. Henry at once adopted the project which I had suggested to Hugh Bisset. At first the lords of the north seemed loth to draw the sword on what appeared the losing side ; and Neville, albeit zealous for the scheme, acknowledged that he found them "lukewarm to his appeal." On second thoughts, however, they resolved to march south, and armed their fighting men ; and the prospects of the royal cause, in consequence, became so much brighter, that warriors in various parts of England, who had hitherto wavered, armed for the king.



Meanwhile, the war had begun in the west. In that quarter no city was of more importance than Gloucester. Situated on the Severn, ninety miles from London, it consisted of four streets, forming a cross, and known as Northgate, Southgate, Eastgate, and Westgate. Occupied by the Romans and Saxons, sacked by the Danes, and celebrated as the scene of the memorable conflict between Edmund Ironside and Canute the Great, its importance as a barrier against the incursions of the Welsh had been recognised by William the Conqueror, who fortified the north and south with embattled stone walls and with strong gates. Of all cities in England, Gloucester was most beloved by King Henry, not only because he was crowned and often resided within its walls, but because it was so stoutly loyal.

Early in the year 1264, John Gifford, a powerful baron, whose seat was at Brimsfield, and who, I may mention, had espoused Mande, daughter of Lord Clifford, widow of the third William Longsword, and mother of the Countess of Salisbury, took the city of Gloucester by stratagem. Accompanied by a knight named Balun (both disguised as woolmongers, and riding on packhorses), Gifford was allowed to enter at the Westgate, and, having thrown off his disguise, turned upon the porters, obtained the keys, and, opening the gates, summoned his friends. Having admitted his force and taken the city, but not the castle, he broke down the bridge over the Severn to make matters more secure.

But Gifford soon found that he had to deal with a vigilant adversary. Scarcely had he taken Gloucester when Prince Edward was upon him. Quickly repairing the bridge, the prince, on Ash Wednesday, assaulted the town at the Westgate; and at the same time the regular garrison issued from the castle to aid his efforts. But both parties of royalists failed in their object; for Gifford made

so vigorous a defence as to baffle the prince's assault ; and the garrison, in sallying, were encountered so bravely by Grimbould Pauncefoot, that they retreated to the castle with considerable loss.

Despairing of entering the city of Gloucester by force, Edward turned into the meadows ; and, springing into a boat, he was rowed up the Severn to the castle. On arriving there in safety, he, amid the cheers of the garrison, set up his banner on a high tower. Gifford, on seeing it planted, was very much surprised. Recovering, however, he besieged the castle from the town side ; but the prince defended it so valiantly that the project of taking the fortress soon became hopeless.

It was now resolved by the baronial party to adopt strong measures ; and Gifford, having brought fresh forces from Brimsfield, proceeded to burn the castle bridge and to cut off all communication between the garrison and the surrounding country. At the same time, Robert Ferrars, the young Earl of Derby—whom neither party could ever claim as entirely their own—having, in conjunction with Peter de Montfort and Simon de Montfort the younger, sons of the Earl of Leicester, sacked Worcester, and massacred the Jews of that loyal city, came in their company to Gifford's aid, with a large body of armed men ; and the prince, not relishing the position in which he was placed, determined to put an end to a contest which was detaining him from more important duties. Accordingly, he left the castle, went unarmed to Gifford and his friends, and in the end prevailed upon them to leave the city, which had suffered much during the operations, by promising that he would repair to the king and use his influence to bring about a settlement likely to secure peace to England.

But it soon appeared that peace was not quite what Simon de Montfort wanted, and that the brave Baron of Brimsfield little com-

prehended the views of the ambitious chief with whom he was leagued.

"By St. James's arm!" exclaimed De Montfort, on hearing of the transaction, "it irks me much to think that the prince should have been so foolishly released."

It was one day about this time that I, constantly hearing rumours of the war in the west from the chapmen and pedlars who halted to bait at the "White Horse," was groaning over the misfortune that prevented me from joining the prince, when I was visited by Walter the Farrier. He came apparently to restore to me Harfagher, my gallant grey; but I soon found that he had another object.

"Welcome, good friend," said I as he entered. "What news?"

"Bad news, Master Merley," he replied. "The sky is black and lowering. Yesterday, in the morning, peace was still possible; in the evening it was impossible."

"What," asked I, "happened in the meantime?"

The Londoners, at the ringing of the great bell of St. Paul's, rose in a body. Led by the Constable of the Tower and Hugh Despencer—a fine justiciary, forsooth!—they went out to Ialeworth, and rifled and burned the mansion of the King of the Romans, which, as you know, was one of the wonders of England. Not content with having wrought that piece of mischief, they came to Westminster; and, after conveying the king's judges to prison, and destroying the mansions of Walter de Merton and Lord Philip Basset, because one had been the king's chancellor, the other his justiciary, they levelled the palace of the King of the Romans—that grand palace—with the ground."

"Bold measures," I remarked; "and, as far as the constable and Despencer are concerned, likely, one day, to be severely punished."

"You speak truly," said the farrier; "and mark the consequence already. Hitherto the King of the Romans has been for peace; but in this world a man who values his property, and whose property is attacked, gets irritated; and he now says that things must be worse before they are better, and gives his voice for war."

"And war there must be," said I.

"For yourself," continued Walter, "I bring a message from Sir Hugh Bisset. Secretly he saw me this morning. 'Let our young Northman be ready to march whenever he is wanted,' said he; 'for any day or hour he may be called upon to join the king's standard.' So, Master Merley," added the farrier, "I have brought you the grey steed you prize so much, sound in wind and limb; and I wish you and your comrades more success in the field than you had when you tried your luck with the rebels in the city."

I, with all my heart, said "Amen," and thanked Walter frankly; and, after we had arranged about the compensation I was to make for the black gelding that had carried me so well in the hour of danger, and lost its own life in saving mine, the farrier took his departure, and I was left to make my preparations. I had already replaced the red mantle that had done such good service. My armour was in excellent condition, my horse well-nigh matchless; and, though my nerves, shattered by the fire and the fever, had hardly recovered, I trusted that the ringing of bridles and the neighing of war-steeds, the waving of banners and the spirit-stirring cheer of men armed to defend the right, would speedily restore me to my wonted vigour. Not without the hope, poor and landless as I was, of cutting a creditable figure among the Anglo-Norman gentlemen who, in spite of De Montfort's threats and promises, adhered to the royal cause, I rejoiced at the prospect of action, and awaited, not without impatience, the summons to join the king's army.

It was now late in March ; and one forenoon, having spent some hours in exercising my charger and myself, I lay down on one of the benches under the trees before the hostelry, to regale my fancy with the idea of doing some high and mighty deed that might be wafted by rumour over the narrow seas to the ears of her I adored ; and, falling asleep, I dreamed a dream. I thought that I, Ralph Merley, was in the city of Constantinople ; that I was crowned Emperor of the East ; that I was conducted in state by barons and clergy into the Church of St. Sophia ; that two knights carried before me the *lati clavici tunica* of the Roman consuls, and the imperial sword ; that I ascended a golden throne, and received the purple from the hands of a papal legate ; that the head of the clergy, standing before the altar, said, in Greek, "He is worthy of reigning ;" that all present cried, "He is worthy ;" and that I was presented with a little vase full of dust and bones, and a lock of lighted flax, as emblems of the brevity of life and the nothingness of worldly grandeur.

And methought, at that moment, one voice exclaimed, "He is worthy of better things ;" and that there stepped from the crowd a man of princely mien, and taller far than any present ; and that in that personage I recognised Edward of Westminster, and that he said, "Ralph Merley, can it be you, and in your senses, who thus ascend a mock throne to attempt to revive a corrupt empire, and rule a race of cunning cowards, when England—our own England—demands the services of all her true sons to make her Empress of the World ? Come with me, my warrior-clerk, and, *sang de Dieu* ! I will find you work worthier of a brave and earnest man." And methought that, as he spoke, the prince grasped me by the arm ; and at that moment I awoke ; and I perceived, with a start, that I was not on a golden throne, but on a rude oaken bench, and that

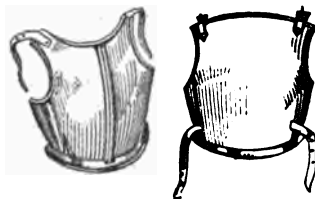
the hand that I had felt was not Prince Edward's, but Gamel Goodrick's.

"Rise, my Lord Ralph," said mine host; "a band of horsemen are coming up the hill. Out of sight, an it please thee, till we see if they are friends or foes."

I started up in confusion, marvelling much how I should have had such a dream, and retired within the doorway of the hostelry. But all doubts as to the approaching horsemen were soon removed. I knew well the stalwart figure and the defiant air of the foremost rider, and I went forth with joy to receive him; for it was Hugh Bisset, the brave knight whom I had learned to love as a brother, in spite of difference of age, and his faults and failings.

"Northman," cried he, "you spoke as to the war like a prophet. The gates of the temple of Janus are like to be open for some time to come. Old Sim is still in London; and, the foreign earl being in London, the sooner we put fifty miles between that city and us the more safe we'll feel. Besides, King Henry, and Prince Edward, and the King of the Romans have marched to set up the royal standard at Oxford. The lords of the North and all loyal men are gathering to the king; so prepare to ride with me, for you, among others, are wanted."

"And," I said, "I am ready."





## XXXVII.

## THE ROYALISTS AT OXFORD.

**I**T was the morning of the 1st of April, 1264, a morning of sunshine and showers, when, in company with Bisset, I rode into Oxford, no longer presenting the peaceful aspect which it did present in the days when I was "a young clerk," but thronged with belted barons and mailed warriors. The scholars had, to a man,

disappeared. In 1260, many of them, owing to quarrels with the townsmen, had removed from the banks of the Isis and the Cherwell to the banks of the Nene, and endeavoured to establish a new university at Northampton. When the king's approach to Oxford became known, the other scholars, true to the baronial cause, followed their former comrades, and left Oxford—so long the seat of learning—to the nobles, and knights, and fighting men who composed the king's army.

In truth, the town hardly looked to me the same place as that from which, years before, I had fled under circumstances so awkward. Of course, not a cap nor gown was to be seen. On all hands feudal banners were displayed: at one place the royal standard, at a second that of the King of the Romans, at a third that of Prince Edward; while around might have been observed the banners of Basset, and Bruce, and Baliol; of Percy, and Twenge, and Comyn, and Clifford; of Mortimer, Marmion, and Merley. From various parts of England warriors, who had gathered to the king's standard, walked and swaggered hither and thither, the men of the North and South scarcely understanding the language spoken by each other. In truth, it is on such occasions as this that a Northern man recognises the truth of what a South country Englishman asserts when he says on this subject—

“Some use strange gibbering, chattering, waffing, and grating: then the Northumbres tongue, especially at York, is so sharp, flitting, froyting, and strange, that we Southron men cannot understand that language.”

Through the martial throng we rode, I gazing around with much curiosity, and Bisset displaying even more than his wonted audacity; for on the way from London we had obtained information as to the movements of the baronial party; and, conscious of being the bearer



of intelligence likely to influence the leaders of the royal army, the knight swelled so big with importance, and looked so high and mighty, that as we passed men stared at him, evidently under the impression that he was John de Warren, or William de Valence, or some other of the great earls of England.

Immediately on dismounting at the prince's quarters, Bisset intimated that he brought tidings of some moment, and with little delay we were conducted to the heir of England. Edward received Bisset with courtesy; and, having received me not only with courtesy but kindness, he congratulated me on my escape and my recovery, though not quite so well as, in after-life, he was wont to do, when foreign ambassadors and royal guests stared with silent surprise that a man could be so plain, so frank, and so familiar without descending in the least degree from the dignity becoming the King of England and the arbiter of Europe.

"I believe, Sir Hugh Bisset," he said, addressing the knight, "the ancients tell us that it was the custom of the Cretans to mark their lucky days with white, and their unlucky days with black; and if I were called on to distinguish that autumn day by a Cretan mark, it would not be white but black. Still it is a matter of gratification that among the many misfortunes of that day, the king had not to count the loss of so brave an adherent as the son of Walter Merley."

"My lord," said Bisset, pompously, "the son of Walter Merley is doubly fortunate: he is in the first place fortunate in having won the good opinion of so great a prince as yourself under any circumstances; and he is, in the second place, fortunate in having under my auspices won some measure of fame in arms at an age when a Roman youth would have barely exchanged the *prætexta* for the *toga virilis*."

"It is creditable to you and to him, Sir Hugh," said the prince ; "and now, to change the subject, pray tell me what tidings you bring to Oxford ?"

"My Lord of Leicester is in London," began Bisset.

"I know it," said the prince. "I suppose he fears that if he left the city, John de Warren, with the garrison of Rochester, would attempt to seize it."

"But," continued Bisset, "my Lord of Leicester gives out that he has detected a conspiracy among the Jews to set fire to London on Palm Sunday."

"That is obviously a pretext for plundering them," said the prince ; "but, *sang de Dieu !*" added he, quickly, "the Jews are the king's property ; and doubtless De Montfort fancies he can do with the king's property as he lists. But pardon my interruption, sir knight, and proceed."

"Well, then, my lord," said Bisset, "it seems beyond doubt that the barons have displayed their standard at Northampton, and sounded the signal of revolt from that town."

"Northampton," said the prince, musingly, "is a strong place. It held out stoutly against the barons in the days of my unhappy grandsire, when they were avenging themselves on the king and proving their patriotism by destroying the country. But who heads them in De Montfort's absence ?"

"In my Lord of Leicester's absence," replied Bisset, "they are headed by Simon de Montfort the younger, by Nicholas Segrave, by Grimbauld Pauncefoot, and others."

"The very men I turned out of Gloucester," remarked the prince.

"And I, my lord, as a man of letters, and as a fighting man," continued Bisset, "grieve to say that the scholars of Oxford have

repaired to Northampton in thousands, and are preparing to do battle for the rebellious barons under a banner of their own."

"I grieve to hear it. I would they had been on our side," said Edward, biting his lip. "I have just had an interview with young Marmaduke Twenge of the North, and a young Scottish noble, by name Aymer Maxwell, who has come with the Lord Baliol; and both, being clerks of Oxford, seem to have scruples about charging against the associates of their youth."

I could not refrain from smiling at the fastidiousness of the young Northern nobles, when I remembered my fierce encounter with John Fitz-John at Merton.

"You smile, Master Merley," said the prince; "what say you on the subject? Feel you such scruples?"

"Not a whit, my lord," I answered, bluntly; "I have neither scruples nor fears about fighting men engaged in a bad cause; and such I deem those who draw their weapons against the king who wears the crown that was worn by Alfred the Great and Edward the Confessor."

"Frankly and bravely answered," said the prince, approvingly. "And now, gentlemen," he said, "as it is necessary that the king should hear, without delay, the tidings you have brought, you will pardon my dismissing you. Sir Hugh Bisset, you are too old a soldier to require to be told to look to your own comfort and that of your men. Master Merley, I again bid you welcome. I would gladly, on a more convenient occasion, learn something from you as to what you know of the state of London."

"As we withdrew, I was stopped and accosted by two young nobles, one of whom I recognised as Marmaduke Twenge, and the other of whom proved to be Aymer Maxwell.

"Ralph Merley, I believed you, by this time, to have been a

cinder," exclaimed Twenge. "I heard you had been consumed by fire. Do I see you in the body?"

"I passed through the fire without being consumed," I said; "and I am in the land of the living and in the place of hope;" and I proceeded to relate my adventure.

"I rode south with your kinsman, Sir Roger Merley," said Twenge; "and I regret to say that he has suffered a grievous mortification by the way. In fact, Sir Hugh Gubium, in whom his confidence was great, deserted, with half a score of men-at-arms, and, doubtless, has gone to the enemy."

"I rejoice to hear it," I exclaimed—"I rejoice to hear it."

"Wherefore?"

"Because I hardly think I could have fought with any heart if that man had been fighting on the same side. In the foeman's ranks," added I, grinding my teeth with rage, "glad will I be to meet him; and woe to him if we come to a close encounter! woe to Sir Hugh Gubium in such a case!"

"He is a stout and valiant knight were he ten times a traitor," observed Twenge, significantly.

"Doubtless," said I, coldly. "If he happened not to be stout and valiant, I should hold him beneath my revenge, and unworthy of my steel. As it is, I say, Woe to him!"

"Ride you to battle with your kinsman, Sir Roger?" asked Aymer Maxwell.

"Nay," answered I; "I am Prince Edward's squire; and I will be content to ride in the track which he makes in the ranks of foemen."

And we went on our different ways.

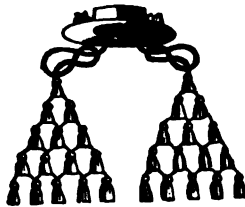
Ere long it appeared that the intelligence brought by Bisset had not been without its influence. A council of war was forthwith

held; and soon after it became known that the king had determined to march to Northampton. Accordingly, orders were issued that all should be in readiness, and at the appointed time the leaders mustered their men and mounted their horses.

It was Thursday, the 3rd of April, 1264, when, with trumpets sounding and banners flying, the royalists left Oxford, and took the way to Northampton. Soon after the march began I was summoned by the prince to ride beside his rein; and, after asking various questions about the men and affairs of the North, most of which I answered to his satisfaction, he drew from me an account of my adventures in London, and of my narrow escape.

"By Holy Edward!" said the prince, "it seems to me that your escape was little less than miraculous. I also have had some that so appeared, one of which you witnessed. I always fancy that men who are preserved by Providence on such occasions are reserved by Providence to accomplish something great for the good of mankind. May God grant that such may be your destiny and my own!"

"Amen," said I, fervently; and, seeing that Edward dropped the conversation, I checked my grey charger and fell back among the prince's squires.





Remains of Northampton Castle

## XXXVIII.

## NORTHAMPTON.

**I**T was late on Friday, the 4th of April, 1264, when the royal army, the van of which was led by Philip, Lord Basset, approached Northampton, and our eyes were gladdened with the sight of that fair town, washed by a winding river, and surrounded by spacious meadows, where flowers grew and kine grazed.

And here I would fain pause for a few moments to describe the place as it then appeared. I have heard that, at the time of the Conquest, Northampton, which had been important in other days, lay in a somewhat desolate state. The Danes having more than once ravaged the locality, the Northumbrians, who, in 1064, rose against Tostig, son of Godwin, and marched southward, to vindicate their rights and liberties, completed the work which the Danes had

begun. So, at least, runs the story ; and certain it is that many of the houses were in ruins and uninhabited, when Simon St. Litz, having received the heiress of Earl Waltheof in marriage, and with her the earldom of Northampton, rebuilt the houses, restored the town, environed it with walls, and fortified it with a noble castle.

From the time of Simon St. Litz, Northampton prospered and increased in strength and beauty ; and often, as years passed on, the kings of England kept festival and held their court within its walls. Among others, Henry III. had shown the town favour ; and the inhabitants loved to tell, and still tell with pride, how, on one occasion, the king, out of regard for the place, gave ten marks to purchase a library ; how, on a second, he gave to the church of All Saints a cup or chalice for the reception of the Eucharist, and to the other churches smaller vessels of silver ; and how on a third, he granted to the abbot and convent of St. James the right of holding a fair on St. James's Day.

Nor, in looking at Northampton, as we approached, could I marvel, in the least degree, that it had been highly favoured by the sovereigns of England. Its situation, its walls, its gates, its churches and monasteries, its castle and hospital dedicated to St. John, made it so fair to behold, that I could not refrain from expressing my admiration to Hugh Bisset, by whose side I rode.

Occupying a gentle ascent, and separated from the lordships of Dalling and Dustan by that branch of the Nene which, coming from Naseby, and joining the water on the south-west of the town, forms one considerable stream which divides it on the south from the meadows in which the convent of De la Pré is situated, Northampton is encompassed with the walls erected by Simon St. Litz. These walls are embattled. They have steps to ascend them, and they are broad enough for six persons to walk abreast. On the

walls the inhabitants, when infirm or ailing, are in the habit of taking the air; and by means of them, in the season of winter, they are in the habit of passing from one part of the town to the other. Four gates, which from their position are known as Southgate, Northgate, Westgate, and Eastgate, give access to the town; besides which, to the south of the Eastgate, there is a postern called the Durngate. Over the south, north, and west gates are chambers inhabited by the poor; and of all the gates much the fairest is the east gate, which is large and high, and embellished with stonework and shields of arms. At the south-east corner of the wall is a large building situated in a close, and known as the Tower; and, on high ground a little without the west gate, stands the castle, with a large keep, overlooking the meadow and the convent of St. James. On the northern side of the castle flows that branch of the Nene which I have mentioned as coming from Naseby; on the other side it is encompassed with a deep trench.

Such was the place which the royal army neared as the sun was setting on that April evening. I have been somewhat minute in my description; but I have my reasons; and, as my narrative proceeds, the reader will find the advantage of having the place before his mind's eye.

On approaching the walls of Northampton, two trumpeters advancing summoned the town to surrender. An answer, however, was returned in terms of insolent defiance; and Henry and his captains proceeded to take up their different posts—the king and the prince encamping in the meadows to the south-east of the town, and Philip Basset towards the west, and near the monastery of St. Andrew. This done, the royal army pitched their tents, tethered their horses, and lay down to rest for the night, and to await the light of another day to commence the assault.



Next morning betimes the royalists sprang to arms, and, with ladders and engines of war, attempted to gain the walls. But it soon appeared that the besieged were well provided with the means of resistance, and, among the besieged the scholars of Oxford particularly distinguished themselves. Formed into companies, each company having its own banner, they declined no post of danger, but, with slings and bows, showered stones and arrows on the besiegers. In vain the king and his captains urged on the assault. The royalists, indeed, exerted themselves to the utmost. But brave as might be the attack, the resistance was as obstinate; and, whenever there was a pause, the scholars seemed bent on exasperating their enemies to the utmost by exercising their humour at the expense of the royal leaders, not, by any means, sparing the king, in whose power they were likely ere long to be.

"There is Henry of Winchester," cried one, "with the white charger, and the lid of one eye drooping."

"Henry," shouted a second, "of whom old Hubert de Burgh said that he was a leper, and unfit to be the husband of any Christian princess."

"Henry," roared a third, "whom Louis, King of France, chased from the bridge of Taillebourg to the gates of Bordeaux."

"Henry," vociferated a fourth, "who persecuted the Oxford clerks in the affair of Otto the legate, and who made them walk barefoot, and without cloaks and hoods, to please an avaricious Roman."

"Henry," shouted a fifth, "of whom Merlin is reported to have prophesied when he said that 'a lynx shall go forth, penetrating all things, and intent on the ruin of its own race.'"

"Of a truth," said a sixth, "this lynx does penetrate everything; since there is hardly a purse in England which it has not penetrated."

"Shame upon him!" shouted a hundred voices; "he is not one whit better than his father, King John."

"As I live, I will not forget these scholars!" cried the king, at that moment in one of his outbreaks, which were always brief in proportion to their violence. "By God's head!" he added, "I will inflict a severe vengeance. I will hang up these rebellious clerks, one and all."

"No," said the King of the Romans; "that would be short-sighted policy. These bellicose clerks are mostly sons of knights and nobles, many of whom are your own adherents."

"But who," urged Henry, "must suffer the consequences of their rebellion."

"As you will, my lord," said the King of the Romans; "only think well ere you proceed to extremities. They are merely led astray by bad example and youthful enthusiasm; and evil would be the hour in which we put to death men whose blood would be so fearfully avenged on us and ours, even by many who are strongly attached to the royal cause."

"Come up, Henry," resumed the scholars after a pause; "try the assault in person. Ascend, O king! and let us poor clerks witness the fulfilment of the Hebrew proverb, which says that we shall yet see an ass mount a ladder!"

"And come up, King Richard, whom the Germans have rejected," cried others. "Ascend, and tell us about the Saracen dancing girls, whom you saw at the court of your brother-in-law, the Emperor Frederick; and how much gold you have given, in the hope of getting that imperial crown which will never rest on your brow."

"By the *Cresse Dieu*!" exclaimed Bisset, as, having in company taken part in the last ineffectual attempt of the royalists, we retired

to our tent, "it tries the patience of men in mail to be thus baffled by a band of gownsmen."

"I confess," said I, "my patience is well nigh exhausted; though I cannot but admire the stubborn courage with which they resist. However, to-morrow Fortune may prove more propitious to our efforts."

"In the meantime," observed Bisset, laughing, "the fickle goddess has granted the gownsmen the best of the encounter."





Merley's Combat with Sir Hugh Gubium.

### XXXIX.

#### THE ASSAULT.

**I**T was Sunday in Passion Week ; and the royalists, having aroused themselves at daybreak, with less anxiety, I must confess, to perform their religious duties than to refresh themselves with meat

and drink, soon learned that there had occurred an important circumstance, likely, not only to shorten the siege, but to bring matters that day to a speedy conclusion.

"What is it?" I asked eagerly of Hugh Bisset, as I sprang from my lair, and prepared myself for what duties the hours might bring with them.

"It seems," answered the knight, "that Philip Basset, whatever his merits as a justiciary—and, God's truth, I should not care to answer for his infallibility in that capacity—has proved himself a skilful warrior."

"In what way?"

"Oh, there is no magic about the matter; only, having discovered that part of the wall near the church of St. Andrew was somewhat frail, he has turned spade, and pickaxe, and mattock, and his men to such good account during the night, that a breach has been made and the ditch filled up, and, ere long, there will be room for, it may be, forty horsemen to enter abreast."

"Glad tidings!" said I, as I girded myself up for the assault that was now in prospect; "and if I only knew that Sir Hugh Gubium was within the town, and felt sure that Our Lady of Newminster would send him across my path, that we might cross swords for old acquaintance' sake, my joy would be well-nigh complete."

"Trust me, youth," remarked Bisset, "you will find plenty of foes to encounter, whether old acquaintances or new."

Ere long all was bustle and excitement, and the prince appearing, mounted on Grey Lyard, rapidly ran his keen eye over the men who followed his banner, and set about ranging them in order for the assault. In the midst of this process he paused, and looked around.

"Where is Master Merley?" he asked.

---

"Here, my lord," answered I, catching the sound of my name, and coming to his side.

"Ride to Philip, Lord Basset," said the prince; "tell him to await my coming, and not to enter the town till I am with him. Say to him," added the prince, "that I would fain join my influence with his to prevent the needless effusion of English blood. Now away."

I bowed low, and spurred off to execute my orders; and, ere I reached the post occupied by Lord Basset, a shout from that direction intimated that something extraordinary had happened.

"What is the matter?" I asked of a squire as I rode up.

"Only a slight mishap of Simon de Montfort the younger," replied the squire. "In his eagerness to defend the breach, he was riding rather too near; and his horse, taking fright, bolted and ran with him right through the breach, and tumbled into the ditch."

"And he is taken?" said I.

"Yes," answered the squire; "after narrowly escaping a worse fate in the shape of a broken neck, he was seized by the soldiers, and here he comes."

And forthwith to the presence of the Lord Basset was conducted a young warrior of twenty, fair, marvellously like the Earl of Leicester, evidently very much mortified, and displaying in his countenance some of the intolerable pride that characterised his father.

"You yield yourself my prisoner, Sir Simon de Montfort?" said Lord Basset.

"I may not choose but yield," replied Simon the younger; "and yet I cannot but curse the mischance that has placed me in your power."

"It is the fortune of war," remarked Lord Basset, grimly; "and

methinks that, in taking your father's son, we may congratulate ourselves on having, on our part, begun the war auspiciously."

I now pressed forward ; and, having delivered the prince's message, to which the ex-justiciary was pleased to lend a gracious ear, turned my horse's head, and galloped back to inform the king of the important capture that had been made. Henry smiled at my account of his rebel nephew's mishap, and the intelligence was hailed with a loud cheer ; and, without delay, the prince, leading round his men, entered the town in company with Lord Basset, their soldiers following with a rush which bore down all opposition.

In their surprise and confusion, the besieged offered little resistance. At first, indeed, darts, stones, and other missiles were thrown from the houses, and the scholars of Oxford attempted to make a stand. But they speedily discerned that the struggle was hopeless ; and, as the prince and his riders cleared the streets, the baronial warriors hastened to save themselves, some by flight, others by surrendering.

In the midst of his career, Edward suddenly reined in Grey Lyard, and, raising his right hand, backed to the Durngate.

"They are escaping by yonder postern," cried he, hurriedly. "Bisset, Merley, this must not be. Follow ! Kill not, but capture. I would wager the horse I bestride that I saw Nicholas Segrave make his exit. Quick ! Every moment's delay is a prisoner lost."

Thus urged, Bisset and I spurred towards the gate, scattering the foe as we rode ; and Bisset, emerging, dashed towards the river Nene, and away in the direction of De la Pré, in the hope of overtaking Segrave. But I accompanied him not. In fact, I had hardly ridden out of the gate when in one of the mounted fugitives I recognised the man I most wished to meet—I mean Sir Hugh Gubium.

"Halt, sir knight!" cried I, in a loud voice. "I am Ralph Merley. We have some old scores to settle; and I imagine we are not likely to find a meeter occasion."

"Interrupt me not, at your peril," replied Sir Hugh, turning in his saddle, and attempting to pursue his way. "I will find leisure another day to chastise your boyish bravado."

"Delays are dangerous, sir knight," said I; "so we part not till we have tried which is the better man," I added, as I spurred my grey steed close to his, and flourished my sword over his head. "Otherwise I denounce you as a coward as well as a traitor."

"Dog of a foundling!" exclaimed Sir Hugh, stung to the quick, and facing round, "you have rushed upon your fate. But your blood be upon your own head!"

"I answer not such language with words," said I, fortunately for myself keeping my temper; and, closing, I engaged him in a fierce conflict.

I soon found that my situation was perilous. In fact, the knight wielded his sword with great determination; and, being expert in the use of his weapon, and infinitely my superior in bulk and strength, he would probably have had the better of the combat, if I had not managed, with a dexterity to which he was a stranger, to send his weapon flying from his grasp.

I now had the odds in my favour; but, seeing that he bared his dagger, and scorning to avail myself of the advantage I had gained, I sheathed my sword, and, drawing my dagger also, intimated by a sign my readiness to fight it out with that weapon.

By this time, however, the conflict, from the ferocity with which it was maintained, began to excite interest; and several of the royalist horsemen who had left the town in pursuit paused to witness the



termination. Among them happened to be Roger Merley de Merley, who, while riding near, was attracted to the spot and tempted to interpose.

"Hold, gentlemen!" cried the Northern baron. "Sir Hugh Gubium, yield to me; and you, Ralph Merley, push not further your enmity against a stout knight who has done the king service in days gone by, and may be persuaded to do so again."

"Kinsman, come not between me and my foe," said I, sternly. "When I have done chastising him, I will hand him over to you to be converted. There is a time for everything."

With these words I grasped my dagger in my right hand—I closed with my antagonist—I took his left hand in mine—and, our horses standing steady as graven images, we renewed the strife with still greater ferocity than before. For a few moments the encounter went on without any fatal result; but, as it seemed evident that such could not long be the case, the excitement of the spectators rose high. Suddenly, however, my dagger inflicted a wound; and my adversary, maddened with mortification and pain, threw out his brawny arms, clasped me round the neck, and exerted all his strength to hurl me headlong to the ground. A shout of execration rose at this foul play; and the lookers-on were on the point of rushing to my aid. But I soon convinced them that I needed no aid against a single man. I stirred my charger with one touch of the spur. My noble Harfagher gave one snort, made one gallant bound; and, with an exercise of strength and skill of which I had not, up to that moment, believed myself capable, I wrenched my bulky antagonist from his saddle, and flung him prostrate on the grass.

As I performed this feat, for which I was all the more loudly applauded that it was wholly unexpected, the prince and his riders dashed up to the scene of the encounter, and Hugh Gubium was

raised from the ground to recover his senses and discover that he was a prisoner to the party from which he had deserted.

Nor was he likely to be solitary in his captivity, for numerous were the prisoners of various ranks. Nicholas Segrave, indeed, baffled the bold Bisset's pursuit, and escaped to London to plan fresh mischief; and, of the scholars of Oxford who had signalised their courage during the siege of Northampton and excited the king's wrath, many escaped by flight; and others saved themselves by shaving their heads, and passing themselves off as friars. But, besides Simon de Montfort the younger, and Hugh Gubium, fourteen barons and knights-bannerets, forty knights of inferior rank, and many squires were taken, and sent to be kept, in strict custody, in different fortresses; and, so complete seemed the victory, that, when the king, committing the town to the custody of Sir Patrick Chaworth, marched out of Northampton, and took his way to Nottingham, there to remain in the castle and keep the festival of Easter, the royalists, almost to a man, believed that the baronial cause was lost, and that Simon de Montfort would soon be flying from the land which he was so ambitious of ruling.

"Young Northman," said Hugh Bisset, as we rode along side by side, "mark you the confidence that pervades the army?"

"Assuredly," answered I, whose spirit was at the time the reverse of humble.

"I would I could share it," continued the knight; "but I have misgivings. '*Experientia docet.*' This, in truth, reminds me too much of the army of pilgrims, when, after taking Damietta, they marched up the Nile for Cairo. Few doubted that they were destined to conquer, and yet the expedition ended in defeat and disaster—in the carnage of Mansourah and the massacre of Minieh."

"Be not a prophet of evil," exclaimed I.

"Nay," said the knight, "I was only thinking—as you may, perchance, learn to your consternation, ere long—how often a haughty spirit goes before a fall."





Tunbridge Castle.

## XL

## MARCH OF THE ROYALISTS.

**I**T soon appeared that Simon de Montfort was not to be daunted by any such success on the part of his enemies as that which the royal army had achieved at Northampton ; and both parties began to perceive clearly that, ere long, a great, perhaps a decisive, battle must be fought. I am anxious to hurry on to that memorable day.

Before doing so, however, it is necessary, in order that the reader may fully comprehend my narrative, to glance at some of the events of the Barons' War that intervened. Indeed, while not of sufficient importance to relate at length, they are of too considerable weight to be wholly omitted.

After leaving Northampton—which I was destined, ere long, to

revisit, under circumstances I little anticipated—the king, at the head of an army flushed with success, marched to Leicester, and from Leicester to Nottingham, the castle of which was held by William Bardolph, a valiant baron. But, valiant as Bardolph was, the idea of defending his post against the royal army did not occur to him ; and the king, taking possession of the castle, remained there to keep the festival of Easter.

The festival of Easter over, Henry, fearing that John, Earl Warren, might prove unable to hold out the castle of Rochester, if attacked by De Montfort's power, sounded trumpets, mustered his men, and, leaving Nottingham, marched in the direction of the stronghold, which was understood to be in peril. Avoiding London, we took the Earl of Gloucester's castle of Kingston-on-Thames, at the barriers of which, in other days, Hugh Bisset and I, Ralph Merley, had, not without success, essayed feats of arms ; and then, not dallying longer, the king marched on to Rochester.

Meanwhile, De Montfort was on the alert. No sooner, indeed, did the earl hear of the fall of Northampton, and his son's captivity, than he panted for revenge and prepared for hostilities. Finding London in the very temper he desired, De Montfort prepared his engines of war, and, mounting his brown barb, rode forth to besiege Rochester ; and, hoping to balance the gain of that city against the loss of Northampton, he girded the place round, and, setting fire to the wooden bridge, and the tower of timber with which the bridge was fortified, he took the first gate by assault, and, having spoiled the abbey and church, was already a conqueror in imagination.

So far, De Montfort was successful in his designs on Rochester ; and he flattered himself that, in a few days, he would be master of the place. But he soon found there is much between the cup and the lip. At the very time when the prize seemed likely to fall into

the earl's grasp, news reached him that the king was approaching London, and probably to the relief of Rochester, with a numerous army ; and De Montfort, fearing not only for his own safety, but for that of London, abandoned the siege, and retreated to the capital, where he was joined by Gilbert de Clare, the young Earl of Gloucester, and Nicholas Segrave, who had escaped from Northampton.

Having raised the siege of Rochester, and placed the fortress in a position of safety, the king again turned towards London ; but, understanding that the citizens were prepared for a deadly resistance, he, still hoping for peace when every chance of peace was gone, marched into Kent to secure the sea-coasts, and, if possible, to persuade the Cinque Ports to send ships to block up the mouth of the Thames, and, by that process, prevent commodities from reaching London by water.

It was a waste of precious time. In fact, this march into Kent, in which I may mention that I did not take part, proved the reverse of fortunate. It gave De Montfort time for preparation, and well-nigh ruined the king's affairs ; and any advantage which Henry gained by it was dearly purchased by the fatigues and annoyances endured by fighting men who were soon to require all their courage and energy on a field of fight. All this appeared too clearly a month later. Meantime, their march lay through the wild and hilly parts of Kent ; the passages were so narrow that the soldiers could not, without difficulty, pass ; and all the time they were molested and harassed by bands of light-armed Welshmen—allured by De Montfort's promises to the baronial standard—who constantly galled the royal army with darts and arrows, cut off all stragglers, and wrought every species of mischief.

Nevertheless, the king proceeded as far as Winchelsea, and, for

the time being, secured the adhesion of the Cinque Ports ; and it was during the march that he achieved one triumph, which, while it raised the spirits of his adherents, deepened and strengthened the antipathy felt towards the royal cause by the Earl of Gloucester, already burning with fury at the thought of his castle of Kingston being in the hands of his enemies.

Among the numerous feudal castles of the house of De Clare—whose possessions are so great, that, from Westminster to Newminster, there are few churches or abbeys in England on the windows of which their armorial bearings do not appear—Tunbridge, standing close on the river, and occupying six acres of ground, is one of the most magnificent. Before this fortress the king appeared ; and the royal army, having courageously commenced the assault, were soon in possession of the place. It happened that the Countess of Gloucester, who was the king's niece, was then residing at Tunbridge. Henry, however, not only set her free, but caused her to be escorted to a place of safety.

"I," said the king, "do not make war on ladies."

It was after leaving a garrison at Tunbridge that Henry proceeded to Winchelsea, and then, without meeting any opposition, on Sunday, the 11th of May, 1264, reached Lewes, a town in Sussex, situated on the river Ouse, near the coast, and forty miles south of London.

From the Conquest, the fortunes of Lewes have been associated with the house of Warren. At that time William de Warren, a young Norman warrior, who espoused Gunreda, one of the daughters of Duke William, obtained a grant of the place, and, liking the situation, chose it as the seat of his feudal power. The rude fortifications, which had existed there in the Anglo-Saxon period, made way for a strong castle ; the town grew rich and im-

portant ; and a religious house, rudely constructed of timber, and dedicated to St. Pancras, was replaced by a priory richly endowed, and tenanted by monks brought from Cluny.

It was thought that the strong castle of the Warrens, occupying an elevated site, would form an excellent base of operations for the royal army ; and it was within the walls of the priory that the king took up his quarters, and there awaited the approach of De Montfort, who soon, with a formidable army, reached the village of Fleeching, to give the royalists battle.

"Now," exclaimed Henry and his captains exultingly, "ere a week passes, Earl Simon will be a prisoner or a fugitive."







Worcester Cathedral.

## XII.

## RAIDS AND REPRISALS.

I HAVE said that in the operations carried on by the king after the relief of Rochester, I, Ralph Merley, had not the fortune to take any part. In fact, while Henry was dealing with the castles of Gilbert de Clare, I was in attendance on the prince, who was giving another of the great magnates of the land a somewhat severe lesson as to the propriety of obeying its laws.

More than once I have had occasion to mention the name of Robert Ferrars, Earl of Derby; and I may say without the hazard of contradiction, that a more refractory personage did not exist among that Anglo-Norman baronage who then, for their misfortune, aspired to rule England with iron hand. Originally a ward of the queen and of Peter de Savoy, and united to Mary, daughter of the Count

of Angoulême, a niece of the king, he was, on attaining his majority, corrupted by the malcontent nobles, and on the death of his first wife, wedded to a daughter of Ralph, Lord Basset, one of De Montfort's sworn friends. Neither party, however, could properly claim the Earl of Derby as a partisan; and he was in the habit of treating the authority of the king and the authority of De Montfort with almost equal contempt. Finding, however, that the adherents of De Montfort were less scrupulous than those of the king, he at times allied himself with the faction, and on more than one occasion led them into enterprises of which, in after years, both they and he had reason to repent.

It happened that in February, 1264, the Earl of Derby indulged in one of those lawless freaks which ultimately involved himself and his house in ruin. Nothing could have been more wantonly mischievous. Allying himself with Peter de Montfort and other adherents of the baronial faction, he suddenly appeared in hostile array before the loyal city of Worcester. Undaunted by the baronial host and the threats of its leaders, the citizens manned the walls, gallantly defended the gates, and at all points offered a manful resistance. It was, however, vain. Unexpectedly effecting an entrance through a wall by the castle, Lord Derby and the De Montforts sacked the town, rifled the dwellings of the citizens, plundered the religious edifices, and having entered the Jewry, and burned the houses and massacred the Jews, completed the business of a day, often to be remembered by them with remorse, by spoiling the king's park.

It was deemed impolitic, notwithstanding the general state of the country, to allow such outrageous defiance of order to pass unpunished; and the prince, whose respect for law had ever been strong, expressed himself with great distinctness on the point. Accordingly after the relief of Rochester by the royal army, it was

determined that Edward should lead a force into Derbyshire to bring the offending oligarch to reason, while the king proceeded on his march.

It is now many years since I took part in that raid ; and, living in a country which has since, by good and just laws rigidly administered, been rendered so peaceful and prosperous, I shudder when I think that the lengths men of rank then went in settling their disputes with the strong hand rendered such retaliation necessary.

But no time was that to be squeamish. It was necessary, in order to make any impression on such a magnate as Robert Ferrars, Earl of Derby, the lord of eighty-one townships in the counties of Derby, Stafford, and Lancaster, to strike a blow at his chief seat ; and accordingly we attacked, and took by force, and demolished without scruple the castle of Tutbury. Having done this we ravaged the earl's lands in all directions ; and I, who had already signalised myself by being the second to enter, at great hazard, the strong castle of the chief of the House of Ferrars, made myself conspicuous by my zeal in urging on the soldiers to havoc and revenge. My excuse is simple. My blood boiled with indignation whenever I thought of the wrongs of the citizens of Worcester ; and not until we had left the earldom of Derby behind did I cool sufficiently to become conscious of the misery we might have caused to those who were not responsible for the outrage of Worcester, and to feel something like remorse for the part I had, from patriotic motives, played in that little war, in which an oligarch was punished and loyal citizens were avenged.

I was reflecting on the subject, riding somewhat moodily in the van of Edward's army on its last day's march, on our return southward, when I was joined by Hugh Bisset, who had just been speaking to the prince.

"It appears," said Bisset, "that this game of demolishing your

neighbour's castle and overrunning his lands, in which you have won fame, is one at which both parties can play."

"What mean you?" asked I.

"Only," replied Bisset, "that a valiant man of war, John Gifford by name, has been treating William Manduit, Earl of Warwick, in somewhat the same way that we have treated the Earl of Derby."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed; "I grieve to hear that so stout a friend of the king should have had such a misfortune."

"It is true, nevertheless," said Bisset. "When Warwick, after leaving Northampton, reached his castle, Gifford happening to be at Kenilworth, sallied forth, surprised the fortress, slew many of the garrison, threw down the walls, and seizing the earl and his countess, carried them prisoners to Kenilworth, where he holds them at ransom."

"That will raise Gifford's reputation," I remarked, "and the spirits of his friends."

"Ay," answered Bisset, "and prove a set-off against the demolition of Tutbury."

"I confess," said I, seriously, "that when my sword is in its sheath and my blood cool, and I think of all this calmly, I am decidedly inclined to regret that the decision of the King of France was not accepted."

"Mayhap you are right," remarked Bisset—"mayhap it is to be regretted that Englishmen should take to civil war to decide disputes that might have been settled without bloodshed; and mayhap, Northman, your grandsons, if you are blessed with offspring, will pronounce us fools for our pains in cutting each other's throats."

"Certes it is more than possible," said I, musingly.

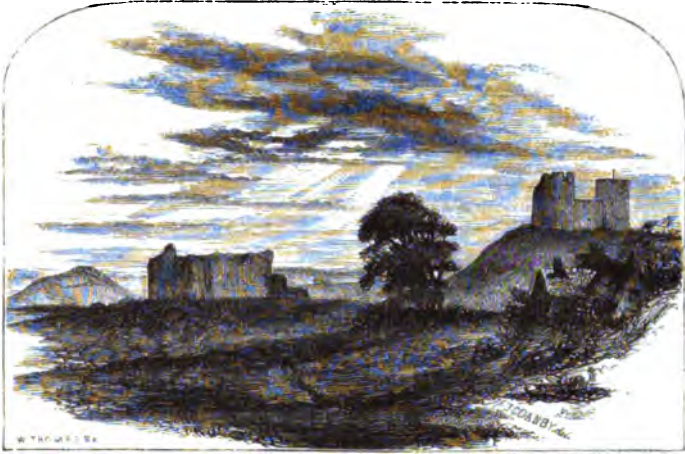
"But," added the knight, "what is that to us? You and I, at

least, are not responsible for war taking place. Nor are we likely to get much by it, save barren honour."

"The war is got up to serve the ambition of Simon de Montfort," said I, bitterly; for my soul at that time always overflowed with bitterness when I mentioned the great earl's name.

"Yes," replied Bisset, gaily, "it is De Montfort's war; it is old Sim's war; about that there can be no mistake; and when he has made what use of the barons he can, and believes he can do without them, he will cast them off as he cast off the king. Let Gilbert de Clare, and Robert Ferrars, and John Gifford beware; for he will not treat them the more tenderly that he owes them some gratitude. I know Simon better than they do, better than the king does, better than the prince does; and he is aware of the fact, and would hang me to-morrow if I fell into his power. But to return to the war," he added, gravely; "be it good or bad, all that we have to do is to bear ourselves, while it lasts and we live, as becomes men who feel that they are on the right side, and who believe that if they fall they will have to answer for the deeds in the body."

As the knight spoke, and I said "Amen," he crossed himself devoutly; and as he crossed himself we came in sight of a feudal town, situated on the western declivity of one of those bold and fertile eminences known as the Southdowns, with walls and towers, and a lofty castle that seemed to sentinel the downs over which it looked. It was Lewes.



Remains of Lewes Castle.

## XLII.

## A COLLOQUY.

IT was Tuesday, the 13th of May, 1264, and Lewes was the scene of bustle and excitement. The king was lodged at the priory ; the prince had his quarters at the castle ; the army was encamped around ; and young lords, knights, squires, grooms, and fighting men of every class lounged about the town. There was much curiosity apparent on most of the faces ; for it was known that Simon de Montfort had sent the Bishops of London and Worcester as ambassadors to profess his loyalty and offer peace, and that Prince Edward, the King of the Romans, and other royalist chiefs, had been summoned to the priory to hold a conference ; and great was the curiosity felt as to the result.

"Beskrew me if this is not passing strange!" exclaimed Hugh Bisset, as he watched the prince's departure from the castle. "If any men in England have done more than others to make this war, it is these very bishops, with the inferior clergy, and especially the regulars, who have cried up old Sim, and inflamed the people against the king and queen. And now, being afraid of their own handiwork, they come, saying, 'Blessed are the peace-makers.' They now want to lay the devil they have raised; but they are a day behind the fair."

"You hold so."

"I would I were as certain of eternal salvation. It is true King Henry is a man of peace, and that the King of the Romans was wont to be a man of peace; but for the time being the king is under the influence of the King of the Romans, and since Hugh Despenser burned his house at Isleworth and his palace at Westminster, the King of the Romans has been as warlike as the god of war himself—a very Mars."

It was immediately after this brief colloquy that I was walking in a somewhat reflective mood between the castle and the priory, whither I had been commanded to follow the prince, when I was arrested by the following brief dialogue:—

"Is not this Ralph Merley?"

"By St. John of Beverley! about that there is no mistake, Aymer. I could tell the carriage of my north countryman—kinsman that is to be—among a thousand."

"It seems to me, Marmaduke, that the bruit of this raid into Derbyshire has given a peacock's strut to all the prince's people."

"In truth, Aymer, I marvel not at it. I would I had been where blows were going and honour to be gained, instead of riding about Kent, a mark for the darts and arrows of the Welsh."

As I faced round, I found, as I supposed, that the speakers were Marmaduke Twenge and Aymer de Maxwell, both of whom had accompanied the king during his expedition into Kent.

"I feared," said Marmaduke, after I had greeted them heartily, "that vanity would have made you forget old friends, considering the renown you have been gaining under the auspices of that dare-devil, Hugh Bisset, who, by evil precept and example, would corrupt you, if——"

"If I were not already so wicked, you would say, that there is no more danger of my being the worse of bad example than there is of a Nubian being tanned by the sun. As for Hugh Bisset, let him be what he may, he is a brave and gallant knight."

"And hath a dark-eyed daughter, I learn, whose portion is considerable," said Aymer de Maxwell.

"Master Merley looks higher than the daughter of a knight, I hear," remarked Marmaduke, mischievously. "But to return to the subject," added he, addressing me, "this raid into Derbyshire is a feather in the caps of the prince's men; and, if rumour errs not, your part in the exploit was the reverse of insignificant."

"Doubtless," said Aymer de Maxwell; "but in human affairs there is ever some drawback; and Master Merley must know that, in aiding to demolish Tutbury Castle, he has made my Lord of Derby his enemy for life."

"I confess," replied I, haughtily, "that consideration does not daunt me. My estimate of feudal magnates is not so high that I either fear their enmity or pine for their friendship."

"Be not so bitter," exclaimed Marmaduke. "Have you not your consolation? Men say that you are getting so high in Prince Edward's esteem that, young as you are, he takes your counsel when he would take none other."



"Pardon me," said I; "I am Prince Edward's squire. I know my place, and I never presumed to offer my lord any advice."

"Mayhap he asks it."

"I am Prince Edward's squire," replied I, "and, if he asks a question, I fail not to satisfy him to the best of my knowledge or capacity."

"Both of which, kinsman that will be, are so great, in my opinion," said Marmaduke, half in jest, half in earnest, "that I would fain hope the prince will long have so safe a counsellor. But a word with you, Ralph Merley," continued the Northern baron; "I would have your advice on a point which somewhat perplexes me."

"I am at your service."

"I have a message from an old acquaintance."

"Of whom speak you?"

"Conan de Gael."

"A filthy Breton."

"You are so full of prejudices! Why did your grandmother train you to be so different from other people?"

"I know not. Perchance she only completed what Nature had begun; but this I do know, that this Breton is a foul and infamous traitor."

"Mayhap he has repented of his treason, and wishes me to sue to the king for his pardon."

"He deserves not pardon, Marmaduke Twenge. By the Holy Cross! he deserves it not."

"That, Ralph Merley, is hardly a Christian view of the case, as Bisset's daughter, the holy maid, will tell thee."

"Possibly; but say, what is it that this Breton requires of you?"

"He asks me for a meeting between the camps; both to come unattended; when he will explain that his object in seeking an in-

terview is one which much concerns both me and himself. So runs his scroll," and, taking it, he handed it to me.

"I have no doubt that this is a trap," observed I, "and I must confess it is cunningly and skilfully baited."

"Your prejudice misleads you," said Marmaduke, "and you look at everything connected with the unhappy Breton through a false light."

"It is human to err," replied I, "and I am not infallible. But you have asked my counsel; and my counsel to you, as a true and loyal man, is to have no dealings with a Breton who has been guilty of the basest ingratitude and the blackest treachery. Avoid him as you would an unclean thing."

"Be not uncharitable."

"There is no room for charity."

"I will well consider what you have said," remarked Marmaduke, in conclusion; and I, having restored to him the Breton's scroll, walked on towards the priory. I had not proceeded far, however, when the young Northern Baron touched my shoulder; and, when I turned, he inquired eagerly—

"What think you will be the result of this embassy to the king with offers of peace?"

"It will end in smoke."

"Then De Montfort will fight?"

"I doubt it not."

"But tell me, what have all come here to fight about?"

"I cannot answer for others; but, for my own part, I am here to fight against the barons and against the Provisions of Oxford."

"And why abhor you so strongly the Provisions?"

"Because they would set up permanently twenty-four tyrants, to every one of whom I utterly object. I don't hate them, for that

would be unchristian ; I don't envy them, for that would be unworthy. But I dislike and distrust them, and hope to see their power diminished instead of increased."

"What would you have?"

"A free monarchy and a national representation, such as was in England before the Conquest, but adapted to the age in which we live."

Marmaduke Twenge looked puzzled, and shook his head, as if he thought my views somewhat vague ; and we parted.





## XLIII.

## THE EVE OF BATTLE.

WHEN the shades of evening closed over Lewes, the position of the hostile armies was unchanged ; but there was no longer a prospect, nor even a probability, of peace. The proposals made in the name of De Montfort, by the Bishops of London and Worcester, might have been favourably considered ; but as the barons still

insisted on maintaining the Provisions of Oxford, the royalist chiefs refused to listen ; and having sent back, by the ambassadors, a stern defiance, they awaited the course of events, and, meanwhile, indulged in the good cheer which the place afforded.

Such was the situation of affairs, when, on Tuesday evening, I, Ralph Merley, strolled forth from the castle of Lewes, in the company of Hugh Bisset, to visit a monk, who was known to the knight as a friend of Master John of Basingstoke, Archdeacon of Leicester. We were conversing with enthusiasm about "Master John," when suddenly a summons to attend the prince reached us. We left the priory, climbed the hill, entered the castle, and soon found ourselves in the presence of Edward. The prince looked more discontented and anxious than ever I had seen him.

"Sir Hugh Bisset," began Edward, gravely, "I know not what you, as a warrior of long experience, think of our position, but to me it seems that we are on the eve of a battle."

"My lord," said Bisset, taken somewhat unawares, "I apprehend that we are."

"And yet," continued the prince, "nobody acts as if he cared about it. Every man seems to have said, 'Let us eat, drink, and be merry,' and to conduct himself accordingly."

"Certes," exclaimed Bisset, who had by no means neglected the good cheer of the place, "they do appear to act on the maxim of the Roman poet, 'Carpe diem.'"

"I wish they would think of to-morrow," said Edward ; "for it is unlikely that De Montfort will long delay an attack. Meanwhile," he added, "something must be done to show we are not asleep ; and I want you to beat up the enemy's outposts—if possible, their camp."

"What are your highness's commands in the matter ?" inquired Bisset.

"My commands are simple—most simple, as they ever are," answered the prince, walking excitedly about the chamber. "Take two hundred light horse, feel your way cautiously, and if occasion serves—if an opportunity offers—I say, make an incursion into their camp, and, if possible, bring off a prisoner."

"Mayhap you would like me to bring my Lord of Leicester in person," suggested Bisset."

"This is no time for foolery, sir knight," said Edward, as he looked haughtily up, and his brow grew dark ; but observing that Bisset was in earnest, his brow cleared, and he added, with a gracious smile, "Forgive my haste. Bring off De Montfort, you said ; no, no !—any attempt of that kind is out of the question. When the king wants to take De Montfort prisoner, he must go himself—the business is too important for us. We must be content to hunt smaller deer. Now you understand me,—so horse and away. Sir Hugh Bisset and Master Merley, I trust all to your courage and discretion."

"We are both brave men, I believe," remarked Bisset to me, with a laugh, as we left the prince ; "but in which of us does Edward suppose the discretion to reside ?"

"Mayhap in both," suggested I.

"When two blacks make one white, Hugh Bisset and Ralph Merley will make one discreet man. However, it matters not ; let us muster our force, and mount our horses, and be off to beat up old Sim."

Not being people to waste time in words on such an occasion, Bisset and I were soon on horseback ; and, issuing from the town, we directed our march towards the hostile camp. After passing Plumpton Plain, however, we observed a formidable body of men, apparently the advanced outpost, and found it necessary to make a

considerable circuit to avoid them. Bisset, however, perfectly comprehended the ground he had to traverse, and under cover of a wood, led us so near the baronial camp that we distinctly perceived that some religious ceremony was being performed.

"They are confessing," said I, reverentially.

"So it seems," replied Bisset, with indifference. "So far as that goes, it is all as it should be ; but I should little like to answer for what piece of hypocrisy De Montfort is playing to impress the imaginations of his men before he leads them to battle."

"Can you guess, sir knight?" asked I.

"I know him so well," said Bisset, carelessly, "that I dare say I could come very near the mark. He will tell his partisans gravely that the cause for which they are about to fight is the cause of God and righteousness ; and that the royalists are opposed at once to religion and liberty."

"Proceed."

"When De Montfort has had his say, the Bishops of London and Worcester will appear to second their great hero's efforts, to inspire the baronial army with religious zeal, grant a general absolution, enjoin them all to fight with vigour, and promise remission of sin and admission to the kingdom of Heaven to all who fall fighting in De Montfort's cause."

"It is certainly some such ceremony that is now going on," remarked I.

"At all events, we are baffled," said Bisset to me, after gazing at the spectacle in silence. The idea of approaching a camp under such circumstances is not to be entertained, unless," he added, evidently reluctant to depart without striking a blow, "you and I, for honour's sake, leave our men, gallop forward, and give the enemy a taste of our steel."

"Nay," replied I, quickly, "I lack not discretion so utterly as that. Not to-night, of all others, should I dream of rushing on destruction or captivity."

"True," said Bisset; "I see you begin to justify Edward's estimate of your discretion."

"When," continued I, "the trumpets sound on the morrow—and now less than ever do I doubt that to-morrow is to be a day of battle—I would fain be alive and free to fight valiantly for the good cause."

"And what, young squire, asked Bisset, "are you to match against the enthusiasm—call it fanaticism if you will—that De Montfort is creating in the host encamped before your eyes?"

"The conviction of being in the right," answered I, quickly.

"It may fail you," said Bisset, somewhat mournfully. "Meanwhile, let us ride back and give our report. By the way, we can bestow a few blows on the knaves whom we marked on Plumpton Plain, and, perchance, carry one or two of them as prisoners to satisfy Edward's curiosity."

"So be it, sir knight," replied I; and Bisset, having given the signal, turned his horse's head, and, heading our party of horse, rode slowly and cautiously in the direction of Lewes.

"Gad's my life!" exclaimed the eccentric knight, as he slowly recovered from the impression that had gradually been produced on him by the scene we had witnessed, "if De Montfort is a hypocrite, he does carry matters to a great length."

"You seem to have a lingering doubt that he is quite unscrupulous," said I.

"I should like to be charitable, and yet I would not marvel much," continued Bisset, "if, as I hinted, he repeated the artifice of making his men wear white crosses on their shoulders, to make them believe that they are engaged in a holy war."



"In which case," I remarked, "they will furnish another proof of his fraud and delusions."

"You are a bitter partisan," exclaimed Bisset.

"May the saints ever keep me such," cried I, "if to be such is to be true to myself, true to my colours, faithful to the Confessor's crown, and free from the falsehood and hypocrisy that prevail in yonder camp!"

"Amen," said Bisset, and added—"mark the lights before us! We must charge through the midst of these knaves!"

"They are more numerous than you imagine," observed I, as we approached.

"Two to one, it seemeth to me," replied Bisset; "but it shall never be told that we shrank from such odds."

As he spoke it became evident that the alarm had been given. Men ran hither and thither, warriors mounted their steeds, and others formed themselves into order of conflict, as if to prepare for the worst. A dozen horsemen rode forward to meet us.

"Halt!" cried one of the riders, in a foreign accent, which I instantly recognised.

"It is Conan de Gael!" exclaimed I.

"Who bids me halt while riding on the king's errand on Plumpton Plain?" sternly asked Bisset, whose ear had not caught my words.

"Beware!" said the same voice; "we are for the cause of God and of righteousness!"

"Then defend yourselves, rebels and traitors!" shouted Bisset. "Charge for King Henry!" cried he in a loud voice to his men; and, as he spoke, he put spurs to his horse, brandished his huge axe, and, felling the Breton to the ground, rode in amongst the enemy, slaughtering as he went, and followed by his band, who so well seconded his efforts, that, in spite of all the exertions of the

foe, our handful of men forced a passage through what, in comparison, seemed a host.

Never had I seen Bisset display such prowess ; his hand dealt destruction whenever it was raised. Ralph Horngarde, a warrior of renown, threw himself resolutely in the way. Before Bisset's axe Horngarde fell a corpse. Emerging with little loss from the perilous adventure, and beating off with ease those who attempted pursuit, the knight preserved silence for a time. At length he raised his head, and, elate with pride, turned to me—

"Ralph Merley," said he, "when Hugh Bisset fills a warrior's grave, and you hear the uncharitable couple his name with disgrace, bear witness that, when a foe was to be encountered, he knew how to bear himself with honour."

"As I live, brave Bisset," replied I, grasping his hand ; and, as I did so, we rode into the courtyard of the castle of Lewes.

"Well, youngling, what wouldst thou with me?" asked Bisset of the juvenile scion of the great house of Courtenay, whom I have mentioned as serving the heir of England.

"My lord the prince awaits your coming, sir knight," was the answer. "He awaits you impatiently. You should know that princes like not to be kept waiting."

"Hear you that?" said Bisset, turning to me. "How they talk ! I'll wager that this imperial chicken sometimes dreams of yet sitting on the throne of gold. But lead the way, boy ; and, when you are emperor, I'll requite the courtesy by coming to Constantinople and keeping the Greeks and Turks from devouring you."

Guided by the page, we soon found ourselves in Edward's presence. Bisset told his story ; and the prince, after listening eagerly to what we had witnessed at De Montfort's camp, cheered up considerably as he heard of our having attacked the outpost and come

off with honour. But it was evident that he continued uneasy and dissatisfied with the state of the royal army.

"I have told you we are on the eve of a great battle," he repeated, striding about the room, "and yet—*sang de Dieu!*—nobody recognises its importance. We are about to fight for a kingdom, and for the privilege of making that kingdom great; and men talk as if we had but to settle some feud between a Bigod and a Bohun. Would that Robert de Burnel were here! However, leave me to my meditations. On the morrow De Montfort will be upon us; so, Hugh Bisset, be on your guard; and you, Master Merley, mount at sunrise—at sunrise, I say, sir!—and bring me the earliest possible intelligence of the approach of our enemies."

As Edward spoke, he waved his hand, and we took our leave.

"My lord the prince is in no serene humour," I remarked as we withdrew.

"Boy," said Bisset, "he has a presentiment of defeat, and so have I."

My heart sank.

"Who is Robert de Burnel?" inquired I.

"He is a young ecclesiastic and lawyer, whom the prince believes to have the longest head in Christendom."





Conan de Gael's proposition to Marmaduke Twenge.

#### XLIV.

#### MORNING.

**I** THREW myself on a temporary couch ; but I slept not. My soul was agitated, and in vain I attempted to lull myself to repose. My heart every minute grew sadder ; for the manner of

the prince, and the whispered confession of Bisset, had profoundly affected me ; and rapidly in my bosom, like some noxious weed in a fertile soil, grew up a strong presentiment of defeat and disaster. It was utterly without success that I endeavoured to shake off the depressing influence ; and it was with absolute envy that I thought of Bisset, who, stretched at ease a few yards from me, gave audible signs of being asleep.

Never before had I experienced the sensations so well known to those to whom wearisome nights are appointed. I was almost afraid that my reason was departing. I might well fear such a result ; for I believe I almost went the length of questioning the justice of the cause for which I was in arms.

" Am I on the right side ?" murmured I, " or have my prejudices and passions blinded me to the truth ? Was the scene which I so lately witnessed a mockery of everything great and good, or is Simon de Montfort in reality, not—as I have hitherto sincerely held—a mere ambitious and fraudulent pretender, but a hero and a Christian, risking all, and ready to lose all, for the sake of justice and righteousness ?"

I gradually became so oppressed with my multitudinous and perplexing reflections, that, albeit the reverse of superstitious, I began to feel as if attacked by invisible foes. Nothing more was wanting to excite my defiant spirit.

" Avaunt, ye shadows of the night !" I exclaimed, half rising and shaking my clenched hand. " Back to the father of lies, who sent ye hither to torment and to tempt me ! Begone, I say, with this message, that I, Ralph Merley, descended from pious and valiant ancestors, defy him as I defy the fiends who represent him in human form !"

" A right brave defiance," remarked Bisset, whom my first

exclamation had aroused from repose ; " but to whom, in the name of all the gods, is it addressed ? "

" I have been haunted by gloomy thoughts," I answered.

" Is that all ? " said Bisset. " Ere you reach my age you will be too familiar with such unbidden visitors to heed their presence. As it is, there stands hard by me a vessel of potent drink provided at the cost of John, Earl Warren. Revive thy courage with a long draught ; and, trust me, sad thoughts will no more resist the influence of the potation than the devil could resist the sign of the blessed cross."

Having delivered himself of this practical advice, Bisset turned on his couch and dozed off. I confess, for my part, that, after hurling defiance at the powers of darkness, I felt my mind relieved ; and, having breathed a prayer, I fell asleep. Ere the first streak of day glimmered in the sky, however, I sprang up, and, without arousing my companion, arrayed myself to ride forth.

" Edward," muttered I to myself, as I buckled on my sword, " shall not say that I, at least, did not appreciate the importance of the crisis."

" Morning," muttered Bisset, partly opening his eyes, and immediately closing them again.

" It is morning—the morning of a day likely to be ever memorable—and I go forth to do my duty, if not animated by hope, then urged on by despair ; and," added I, " let those enemies of the king who cross my path to-day tremble."

" Amen," said Bisset.

I hastily broke my fast ; and I was in the saddle, and riding out from the courtyard of the castle of Lewes just as the sun rose. In spite of the number of fighting men quartered in and around the town, all was still ; and the silence was unbroken save by the occa-

sional neighing of a war-steed and the tread of the sentinels whom the prince had ordered to be posted thick in order to guard against surprise.

A few minutes' riding carried me beyond the outposts of the royal army, and I was on the downs. It was a lovely May morning ; the sun had risen, and was endeavouring to pierce through a light grey veil which hung over the farthest hills. The dew began to vanish from the grass, and flowers and herbs exhaled their odours. Nothing whatever was to be seen of our baronial foes—nothing indicated that the place was about to be disturbed by the clang of mail and the clash of spears.

I cautiously ascended to Plumpton Plain, which commands a vast extent of country. Finding nobody, I rode onward ; and, carefully avoiding the outpost of the baronial army which we had beaten up on the preceding night, I advanced till I could almost descry De Montfort's camp, and hear the hum of its occupants. Farther I had not the temerity to go ; so, riding aside, I sheltered myself from view on the verge of a wood, and, dismounting, calmly seated myself on a large stone to keep watch and ward, while my steed quietly cropped the grass.

Ere this the morning breeze had refreshed and restored me ; and I was exactly in the circumstances and the mood when, removed for the hour from stirring life to a lonely place, a man, with romance in his composition, indulges in tender thoughts. Notwithstanding the proximity of De Montfort's camp, which I could dimly descry, I felt as if in a solitude ; nought broke the stillness save the wail of the plover and the note of the linnet ; and, as my memory recurred to the events of the past twelve months, my heart conducted my mind quickly to the fair being with whom my destiny seemed associated. I was not one of those who believed that woman's faith is writ in

sand ; but I could not but wonder whether time and distance had changed her ideas, and whether any tender remembrance of me remained in the heart of her whom I was willing to worship at a distance, as an Indian pays homage to his star.

" Mayhap she may never even hear of my name," soliloquized I. " But yet a little time, and she shall hear of me ; for this much of the future I, Ralph Merley, can predict as safely as if I had read it in the book of fate, that I am destined, ere long, to perform achievements which minstrels will be proud to celebrate and chroniclers eager to record."

I had been for some time occupied with such musings—not, however, without keeping a sharp eye in the direction of Fleeching—when suddenly my steed, which had been quietly grazing, raised his head and uttered a neigh that was answered from the wood. Awaking from my romantic dreams, and casting a searching eye around to see that no enemy was in sight, I rose, drew my saddle-girth tight, and mounted, to be prepared in the event of an attack. Scarcely had I done so when my ear was attracted by a conversation which so monopolized my attention that I neglected even to keep watch for De Montfort's army.

" Refuse not my terms," said one voice.

" I have refused them," said another.

I knew that one speaker was Conan de Gael, and that the other was Marmaduke Twenge.

" Reflect," said De Gael ; " when De Montfort holds the reins of government, the crown wards will be virtually at his disposal. Gifford, as husband of her mother, has influence with the fair one ; John Fitz-John is cured of his brief madness, and now sighs for the daughter of Philip Basset ; and Henry de Lacy will gladly surrender



a bride to save an earldom. Do you hesitate when I offer you a countess, the heiress of great earls?"

Marmaduke did not answer.

"By the time the sun sets," continued the Breton, "I will not think it worth while to propose terms; for you and Sir Roger de Merley will either be dead or at De Montfort's mercy. As I speak he is commencing his march, and he will find the royal army sunk in sleep and an easy prey."

"And what then?"

"What then? Why, in the hour of victory think you that De Montfort will refuse me, who have sacrificed so much for his cause, either Sir Roger's lands or his daughter?"

"De Gael," said Marmaduke, earnestly, "supposing your ambition gratified, you would not be happy."

"And wherefore?"

"The men of the North are fierce and hard to contend with; and if you were lording it over the baronies of the Merleys you would have to strive, not only against the antipathy of the people of the country, but of the Merleys themselves; and they are terrible haters."

"I value not their antipathy."

"Part of the barony," continued Marmaduke, drily—"a small part, it is true, but still a part—will fall to Ralph Merley, who is now in Lewes with Prince Edward, and I believe in high favour. How would you like him for a kinsman, with all his influence as a strong adherent of the prince, and as heir male of the barons in whose place you would sit?"

"You exhaust my patience," exclaimed the Breton. "I offer terms which if you knew your own interest you would at once accept; and you begin to preach to me about that misproud pauper

who was originally picked like a waif from some plank on the shore, and palmed as her grandson upon a superstitious and credulous Saxon woman in her dotage."

"Cease," cried Marmaduke, indignantly ; "malign not that noble dame, or we quarrel."

"Pardon me," said De Gael ; "I was wrong in that ; but as for this Ralph Merley, let him beware ! To him the hour of defeat is the hour of doom. For him De Montfort has no pardon, and Sir Rufus Ribaut and I have sworn that there shall be no escape. But a truce to this talk. Why waste words ? Consent or not to what I ask."

"I consent not. By St. John of Beverley, decidedly not !"

"Then, Marmaduke Twenge, you are my prisoner."

"Your prisoner !" exclaimed the other, scornfully.

By this time the Breton and the Northern baron had reached the verge of the wood ; and when Marmaduke, holding his charger by the rein, walked into the open space, they were so near that I could mark every movement. But I having purposely backed my steed, was still concealed from them by the trees. Without delay they drew their swords. Ere doing so the Breton whistled, and almost instantly two other actors appeared on the stage ; and in these I at once recognised Stephen Fitz-Scrob and Oscar the Scot. The young Northern baron was face to face with three antagonists.

I now deemed it high time to interfere, and was on the point of rushing to the rescue, when casting my eyes in the opposite direction, I observed De Montfort's army was in motion and advancing rapidly. Every moment was now of such value to the royal army that I cursed my ill fortune in having to take part in a fray. However, seeing that I had no choice I said, "I'll make short work of it ;" and giving my charger the spur, was among them so suddenly

that all four paused from the encounter, and stared in mute surprise.

"Traitors and rebels," cried I, "look to yourselves!"

And short work indeed I, Ralph Merley, made of the Breton and his accomplices. Bringing the shoulder of my horse right against Fitz-Scrob, I whirled him with such force against a tree that he fell senseless on the grass, the blood gushing from his mouth. At sight of blood, Oscar the Scot raged like a Caledonian bull, and made a ferocious lunge at me with his long weapon; but I, warding it off, passed my blade through his body, and then, sheathing my sword, I rushed to Marmaduke's aid. "Filthy Breton," said I, "I disdain to defile my good sword with your impure blood;" and I bent forward on my steed, seized him in both hands, lifted him in the air, and with all my might dashed him to the ground.

"He is dead," exclaimed Marmaduke, recovering his breath.

I had no time, however, to look to the Breton's condition. It was certain that we had been observed, and that a party of light horse left the van of De Montfort's army to give chase.

"Mount, and ride for your life," cried I; "there is not a moment to lose."



## XLV.

## THE ALARM AND THE ARRAY.



WHEN on Wednesday, the 14th of May, 1264, we galloped into Lewes, it was still early morn ; indeed, it was so early, that, save a few soldiers who had gone out to seek fodder for their horses, the royalists were asleep. The prince, however, was astir, and he was pacing his chamber with long and agitated steps when I presented myself, flushed and excited.

"My lord," said I, as he halted with a look of eager anxiety, "De Montfort is marching hither in all haste, with the design of taking the king by surprise ; by this time his vanguard has reached Plumpton Plain."

"Enough," said the prince ; "you have done your duty. Rouse Hugh Bisset, and let him give the alarm."

I obeyed with alacrity ; and Bisset, accustomed to such emergencies, sprang up coolly and deliberately to issue the necessary orders. In a short time the castle, and town, and priory were in commotion ; soldiers were running to and fro ; captains were setting their men in order ; and the king, the prince, and the King of the Romans were arraying them for battle.

It appears that De Montfort, informed of the alarm having been

given, and his project of a surprise having been frustrated, halted on Plumpton Plain. From his car, placed on the eminence in the midst of baggage and sumpter-horses, he displayed his standard, fastening it securely, and surrounding it with soldiers ; and in another car he shut up four of the citizens of London who had been engaged in the plot of John de Gizors, with an idea that they might, in the confusion, fall by the weapons of their own friends.

After these preliminaries, De Montfort marshalled his army in four divisions. The first of these, consisting of the Londoners, was under the command of Nicholas Segrave, and was to act in concert with the second division, under John Gifford, Henry de Montfort, the earl's son, and Humphrey Bohun the younger, son of the Earl of Hereford. The third was commanded by Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford, and John Fitz-John. The fourth was under the eye of De Montfort himself, and of Hugh Despenser, his justiciary, and it comprised the warriors on whose steady courage he most relied.

Before leaving Fleeching he had conferred knighthood on Gilbert de Clare and Robert de Vere to stimulate the energies of the two young earls.

Meanwhile, the king arrayed the royal army in three divisions. The first, opposed to that part of the baronial host composed of the Londoners, and that commanded by John Gifford, Henry de Montfort, and Humphrey Bohun the younger, was led by Prince Edward, aided by John, Earl Warren, and William Valence, Earl of Pembroke. The second division, opposed to Gilbert de Clare, Robert de Vere, and John Fitz-John, was under the auspices of the King of the Romans and his son, Henry of Cornwall. At the head of the third division, opposed to De Montfort, appeared the king, gorgeously armed, mounted on a white charger, the symbol of sovereignty, and

attended by Philip, Lord Basset, and by Robert Bruce, John Baliol, John Comyn, Roger de Merley, Marmaduke Twenge, and the other Northern barons.

Such was the array of the royalists when they marched forth to do battle with De Montfort, who, nothing daunted, left a strong reserve on the downs, and descended into the hollow.

I was gazing around me on the imposing spectacle which the two armies presented, when Hugh Bisset approached.

"Young Northman," said he, "mark you, on the grey charger, yon tall warrior, who has been showing very little of that ardent zeal to obey which, according to philosophers, augurs the ability to command?"

"The prince?"

"Yes. I bring you an order from him. You are to place yourself in close attendance, to take up your post at his left rein, and to leave it not."

"Not till I am cut to pieces," said I.

"I am to be at his right," continued Bisset. "I confess I could imagine a less perilous post. But a man can die but once; and, if one is to fall on foughthen field, as well by a prince's side at Lewes as in meaner company in any other place."





Prince Edward, Merley, and Hugh Bisset at Lewes

#### XLVI.

#### THE BATTLE OF LEWES.

**I**T was now nigh the hour of noon ; and the sun, shining brightly, flashed upon the arms and weapons of the baronial warriors as they approached to close with the royalists in the shock of war.

De Montfort's army had the aspect of an army of Crusaders about to fight for the Holy Sepulchre ; and, as he descended from Plump-ton Plain into the hollow, I could almost have imagined myself watching, in my native Syria, the host of Godfrey or of Baldwin—so solemn seemed their march. Every man, as Bisset had shrewdly predicted, wore the white cross ; neither clarions nor trumpets announced their coming ; but, as they moved downward, they sang in solemn accents, and, as we listened, we heard the martial psalm, "Let God arise ; let His enemies be scattered."

I was by this time riding on the left hand of Prince Edward, while Bisset was on the right ; and I confess that I was awed with a spectacle, which, to a stripling, appeared grand and imposing. I soon became aware, however, that on my companions it produced a very different impression.

"Another notable instance of Satan's servants in Christ's livery," remarked Bisset aloud.

"I call Heaven and earth to witness," exclaimed the prince, "that this is a mockery of everything holy. My malison upon the false cowards, who are rebels without daring to own their rebellion, and who mislead the weak and the unwary by coming against Christian Englishmen as they might against Turks or Pagans ;" and as Edward spoke, his head towering over all around, his magnificent person clad in chain mail, and his charger, Grey Lyard, pawing the ground in impatience for the charge, he seemed by his air, by his gesture, by his attitude, by the disdainful toss of his high head, to express the contempt with which, in his heart, he regarded the foe.

At this time the king, sitting on his white steed, his head uncovered, pronounced the words, "Simon, I defy thee !" And these words, passing from man to man, and rank to rank, and division to division, served as the signal for action.



"Now," cried the prince, tightening his rein and laying his lance in rest, "strike for the king, and may God and St. Edward be our aid! Charge!" and, with trumpets sounding and banners flying, and war-steeds prancing, we advanced, with a rush, upon the enemy.

I have said that it was to the cavalry led by John Gifford, Henry de Montfort, and Humphrey Bohun the younger, and to the Londoners, under Nicholas Segrave, that we were opposed; and it was the cavalry that had to bear the first shock. Perhaps they had not expected to have to encounter the prince. It did not seem, in any case, that they were fully prepared. The leaders appeared to have been consulting, hesitating and undecided, when we were upon them like a hurricane. Ill fared it with them. Edward bore the stalwart Gifford from his saddle; Bisset beat Henry de Montfort to the ground. My sword descended with resistless force on Humphrey Bohun, and the haughty heir of Hereford fell with a deep, though not a mortal wound.

It soon appeared that the royalists under the prince were not at all inclined to do their work by halves. Without delay this first success was followed up. In front, on Grey Lyard, charged Edward, baron and retainer alike recoiling from the grey steed and the tall rider; behind came thundering the horsemen of Warren and De Valence, completing the rout we had so well begun. Resistance was vain. Down went man and horse, till seized with panic, some fell back on Segrave's division, and others attempted to escape by crossing the Ouse. But those who fell back only put off the moment of danger; and many who took the water, including sixty knights, were drowned in the attempt to cross. Carrying all before them, some of our men charged up the hill, captured De Montfort's standard, slew William Blund, the standard-bearer, and, at the same

time, unhappily, killed the four loyal and worthy citizens whom the earl had left there in the very hope that they would fall by the weapons of their friends.

Meanwhile, having swept De Montfort's light cavalry from the ground, we reached Segrave's division, composed of the Londoners, who numbered fifteen thousand men, all eager, as they had boasted in the morning, to fight to the death for De Montfort. At this point the prince reined up, and, as he paused to take breath, surveyed the foe.

"*Sang de Dieu!*" exclaimed he, "how strong muster the rebel citizens—the men who but yesterday, and in the presence of Ralph Merley himself, stoned the queen, my mother—who would have drowned her as a witch! I rejoice to have an opportunity of proving how little they will do now that they have not to deal with ladies and demoiselles, but with men. What say you, Biaset?"

"My lord, my daughter was one of the demoiselles whose lives they imperilled."

"Upon them, and give them a lesson in chivalry."

"With all my heart," said the knight.

"Down with the braggart citizens!" shouted hundreds of voices; "they have too long been trying to lord it over their betters."

Nicholas Segrave was a bold and skilful warrior, and the Londoners were by no means deficient in courage in war; and, had resistance been possible, it would, doubtless, have been stubborn. No chance, however, had they of even a momentary struggle. Never, I opine, can that charge, though forgiven, be forgotten. The enthusiasm, the fire, the impetuosity of millions of men seemed to be concentrated into that phalanx, which, headed by the prince, penetrated at a rush into the midst of the armed burghers, scattering them as the whirlwind scatters leaves in autumn. Driven from his

post, Segrave almost lost his senses; and, whirled to the right and to the left, the Londoners threw down their arms to run the lighter, and fled fast in the direction of Croydon.

Unhappily, at that moment neither Edward nor any of his captains preserved the slightest degree of coolness; and, without the reflection of an instant, we went off in pursuit. I have never had any clear idea of what then took place; but I have vague recollections of the prince shouting his mother's name, and of Bisset accusing the fugitives of having attempted to drown his daughter; while I, with my left arm severely wounded, and my blood on fire, shouted that it was I whose head they would have carried on a pole as an offering to De Montfort.

Many years afterwards, when all was forgiven, I, Ralph Merley, while feasting in King Edward's company in the city of London, was told by one of the citizens who fled from Lewes, and who, having escaped, became an alderman, that when, with my steel cap bruised, my armour battered, my scarlet mantle in shreds, my sword red with gore, I spurred on my grey charger covered with foam, they, remembering my ride through the fire, and the remark of Sir Rufus Ribaut as to my being a fiend in human form, actually believed that I was a fiend; and that their terror was intense as I urged on the chase, and ever and anon roared and screeched—

"Down with the braggart citizens! Down with the servile abettors of De Montfort! Down with the willing slaves of the twenty-four tyrants!"

Four miles had the chase continued; much time, every minute of which was precious, had been lost, when, either tired of the pursuit, or admonished by his better genius, Edward reined in Grey Lyard, and called a halt.

"Methinks, gentlemen," said he, "we have done enough for ven-

geance. Let us back now and insure victory;" and, wheeling round and rallying his men, he rode back towards the scene of action.

Many of the horsemen, however, pursued the chase; and it was not till the fugitives, weary and footsore, found refuge in the abbey of Croydon, that they took rest, and breathed freely, and thanked God for their escape.

Meanwhile, riding rapidly backward, we approached the scene of battle. Our absence had been comparatively brief; and, as we had routed the divisions opposed to us, it could hardly, we supposed, have influenced the fortunes of the field. But, short as it had been, our absence had proved utterly disastrous to the royal cause. As we neared Lewes, and the ground from which we had driven De Montfort's cavalry and the citizens, I observed that Edward's frame shook with agitation, and that Bisset's bold countenance fell.

"Holy Edward!" exclaimed the prince, rising in his stirrups, and bending forward, as if doubting the evidence of his eyes, "what do I see?"

"My lord," answered Bisset, "it is a lost field!"





## XLVII.

## THE LOST FIELD.

**B**ISSET was right. It was a lost field that Prince Edward saw before him. During his absence, De Montfort and De Clare had not been idle, and fortune had gone so decidedly against the king that there hardly remained a hope of retrieving the day. The royalists had almost vanished from the ground. Gone was the king ; gone were the King of the Romans and his son, Henry of Cornwall ; gone were Bruce and Baliol, and Comyn, and Marmaduke Twenge, and Roger de Merley. Few, save the dead and wounded, were left ; and the dead and wounded lay somewhat thick around ; for, in the conflict, about five thousand men had bit the dust.

It appears that De Montfort no sooner received intelligence that Edward had gone off in pursuit of the Londoners, than he perceived, in an instant, the advantage he had gained.

"By St. James's arm !" he exclaimed to Hugh Despenser, "the fiercest of our foes is proving our truest friend. The Londoners are good citizens, but indifferent soldiers ; and Prince Edward is mad to

carry off the best part of his army in pursuit of the worst part of ours."

"True, my good lord," replied Despenser; "and we have only to make a good use of his absence to secure a victory."

"Trust me, Despenser, I see my way," said De Montfort. "I will concentrate my forces, and take the king alive; and, ere to-morrow's sun sets, Edward also will be my captive."

"He may escape," suggested Despenser.

"Nay," replied De Montfort; "he will not fly from the crown to which he is heir. 'Tis a bauble, doubtless, but one that has a strange fascination for men of ambition. They gather round it as eagles gather where the carcass is."

Without wasting time in words, De Montfort applied himself to the execution of his project. Concentrating his forces, of which two divisions still remained untouched, he exerted all his energies to take the king alive. While De Clare attacked the division of the royal army under the King of the Romans with so much success, that King Richard, seeing that all was lost, fled from the field and sought refuge in a mill that stood between Lewes and Southover, on a stream called Winterburn, De Montfort and Despenser, overcoming opposition, attacked that under the king, slaughtered the Northmen in heaps, took Bruce, Baliol, Comyn, and Roger de Merley and, finally, after the king's white *destrier* was killed under him, took Henry himself, and conducted him a prisoner to the priory.

Two of the royal leaders, one of whom was old, the other young, made a desperate resistance—Philip, Lord Basset, and Marmaduke Twenge. But Basset, after fighting till he was severely wounded, saw the necessity of yielding; and Marmaduke, seized by Despenser, was compelled to yield to the justiciary.

Meanwhile, Sir John Brevis, following close on the track of the

King of the Romans, found him in the mill, and carried him off to share his brother's captivity.

By this time, so far as the field was concerned, all was over ; and De Montfort, learning that Gifford, and Henry de Montfort, and Humphrey Bohun the younger, had been carried prisoners to Lewes castle, sent a force to seize the fortress. But this proved no easy business. In fact, the resistance was so obstinate, that the baronial soldiers were forced to abandon the attempt. In their rage, they attempted to set fire to the priory ; but the monks, aided by the royalists, exerted themselves so much to save their house that the fire was extinguished.

Such was the posture of affairs when the prince, returning to the field, still undaunted, sent to challenge De Montfort to renew the conflict. But for a renewal of the conflict it appeared that his friends had no heart.

"We can still retrieve our laurels, and we are bound to make an effort," said Edward, looking round.

"It is hopeless," said John, Earl Warren, who had ridden up.

"It would be madness," said William de Valence, Earl of Pembroke.

"Richard Cœur de Lion encountered greater odds at Joppa," said the prince, "and he conquered."

"But we are not at Joppa," said Warren, shaking his head.

"Nor have we Richard among us," said De Valence.

The prince bent his brows, but he refrained from giving vent to the answer that sprang to his lips.

"Sir Hugh Bisset," said he, "let the reinforcements be thrown forthwith into the castle ; and if you, noble earls, will confer with me for an instant, I take upon me to convince you that something may yet be done to save all."

But the two earls were, by this time, engaged in a close colloquy in which it was clear they wished the prince to have no share ; and, when they were remounting their steeds, there was a confused movement and a mysterious whisper. In fact, messengers from the baronial camp came with De Montfort's answer to Edward's challenge, which was, that the earl was in no mood to fight with vanquished foes, but that on the morrow terms would be offered to the prince.

"In the meantime," said De Montfort, "if Sire Edward attempts more mischief, I will cause the heads of my captives to be struck off, and carried as ensigns for our army."

"De Montfort knows the influence of such a threat," said Edward ; "the time may come when he will repent it."

"And will come," bitterly muttered I, who, in obedience to the orders of the morning, was still at the prince's left hand.

At that moment Philip Lovel, one of Edward's squires, dashed up in haste.

"Well, sir, what tidings bring you ?"

"My lord, the Earls Warren and Pembroke are escaping ; they have ridden off the field with three or four hundred knights."

"Whither ?" asked the prince.

"To Pevensey."

"Let them go," said Edward, coldly ; and at a signal from him the squire fell back.

"What if I also escape with a strong band, and throw myself into Ely till better times come ? I have dreamt of such a step in case of the worst."

"Nay, my lord," said I, "that were no true policy under the circumstances."

"Alfred went to the neatherd's cottage," continued the prince,



perhaps only half-conscious of my presence, "and he came forth to conquer, to rule, to legislate."

"These are not the days of Alfred, nor are we dealing with a foreign foe," said I.

"And what would you counsel, young gentleman?" asked the prince. "You have this day fought too bravely not to have won a right to speak freely."

"My lord," said I, "submit to circumstances; you are deserted by your friends—do not desert yourself. De Montfort has won a victory; but many a victory has been worse than a defeat, and this of De Montfort's will so prove."

"Wherefore?"

"Let him use it as he will, the fruits will be bitter. He cannot fulfil half the promises he has made—he cannot fail to disappoint the multitude; he is certain to quarrel with the barons; he will have neither rest nor peace."

"And what would you have me do?"

"Fear not a temporary captivity. A reaction in your favour will quickly come; and within a year half the country will be shouting out your name, and eager to arm in your cause."

"I see it all," said the prince, musingly.

"If we have lost a field," I added, "we have learned a lesson; and may we profit by it when again we have an opportunity of conquering. Meanwhile, yield to fate."

I spoke with so much enthusiasm, that the prince, convinced of my earnestness, listened with patient attention. When I ceased, he seemed to ponder for a few moments, and then looking at me, he said, "Would that Robert de Burnel were here!"

"Would that he were, my lord!" said I; "and if so, I feel assured he would give the same counsel that I give."

"It is possible."

"My lord, reject not my advice because it comes from a stripling, or because it sounds harsh, as harsh it cannot fail to sound in the ear of prince and Plantagenet."

"No," said the prince, rousing himself; "you have almost persuaded me. But it is right," he added, "in such a matter to take time to weigh well, and not until sunrise to-morrow will I form any resolution. For the night I remain on the lost field."





## XLVIII.

## FROM FIELD TO FORTRESS.

THE sunset and the shadows closed over the carnage at Lewes.

Night deepened and passed, and still a light glimmered from the casement of the small house where Edward had set up his banner and taken up his quarters. When Thursday morning came, everything was still in a state of uncertainty; and I, having had my wounds dressed by a barber, and my raiment somewhat restored, prepared to fight, if fighting there was to be, or to escape in case of there being a treaty.

However, there was much going and coming between the prince's quarters and De Montfort's camp; and at length it was rumoured

that by the intervention of the Preacher and Minorite brethren, a treaty had been agreed to; that Edward and Henry of Cornwall, who had now joined the prince, were to surrender in order to purchase the liberty of their fathers, the king and the King of the Romans; that the prisoners taken at Northampton were to be set free; that King Henry was to issue a proclamation commanding his partisans who were not taken to return to their homes, and the captains who held his fortresses to surrender them; and that the points in dispute were to be left to the arbitration of four French noblemen and the French king's brother, Charles of Anjou, who had recently been invested by the pope with the sovereignty of the Two Sicilies.

"I confess," said I, when Bisset, after an interview with Edward, told me all this, "I rejoice that the prince's chivalry has not got the better of his judgment; for it does seem to me that a renewal of the struggle would have been hopeless."

"That is all mighty fine," said Bisset; "but I foresee that De Montfort, having the upper hand, will do just as he pleases, and that the arbitration will never come to anything. Meantime I desire not to give him a chance of laying me up by the heels, and in truth would rather take to the free forest and live as an outlaw."

"You would rather hear the lark sing than the mouse cheep?"

"Assuredly; but meanwhile, let us make for Northampton; there thou canst find books to feed the mind, and see damsels to please the eye; and Patrick Chaworth is so hostile to De Montfort that he may decide with our aid on holding out at all risks. If not, we can make for Durham, and take refuge with the great Lord Neville, at Raby."

"And if the worst come to the worst," said I, "we can cross the Tweed."

As I spoke I received a summons to attend Edward, and I lost no

time in seeking his presence. He was alone, and looked calm and resolute.

"From sunset to sunrise," said he, taking my hand, "I have pondered my position and the state of England. I have well considered your counsel, and I see that what you advise is sound policy."

"My lord, I am honoured."

"But let us not waste time," continued he, "which to you at least is precious. Bisset tells me that you have among the enemy mortal foes who have vowed your destruction. Mayhap, however, this may tell you that you have friends whom you had forgotten;" and he handed me a scroll, carefully sealed and addressed to me.

"It is from the Lord Fitz-John," said I, reading. "He says he cannot fulfil the promise which I mentioned to your highness he made to me; that I have enemies against whom he could not guard me; he gives me a hint to fly, but adds that I am watched;" and I handed the scroll to the prince.

"It is, perhaps, as well," said Edward, having read; "and when we are victorious—as victorious we must be—you will show this young lord more generosity. Meanwhile, I hear you are concerned about your grey steed having suffered too much in yesterday's action to admit of his undertaking a journey to-day. Let not that fret you. Among my horses there is a roan which will carry you with almost equal speed. I will give instant orders for his being delivered to you, and I will keep yours instead till we meet again, when I will return it. Nay, no objections—no thanks; I know the value you attach to your grey."

"I would fain preserve my noble kinsman's noble gift, my lord," said I, "to charge on that day when we are to crush our enemy like a potter's vessel."

"Enough!" replied Edward. "I comprehend you; and I see that day will surely come—ay, sooner than they fancy."

As the prince spoke, Henry of Cornwall came up, and, after some formal courtesies, I took my leave. Bisset was ready to mount; and, when I had secured the prince's roan, we moved slowly through the royalist camp.

"Now," observed Bisset, "cool is the word."

"I fear we are watched," said I. "Nevertheless, if we have good luck, we may escape without being noticed."

But we were not destined to have such good luck: we did not escape without being noticed. Scarcely had we emerged from the royalist camp, and set our faces northward, when a furious yell and a flight of arrows admonished us of danger; and on our track came Sir Rufus Ribant and Conan de Gael.

"Ride for life!" cried Bisset, spurring onwards; while I, though feeling that I was wounded, followed with what speed I could.

Imminent as was my danger, I could not help being diverted while watching Bisset. As he galloped on, he laid himself close to his steed to avoid the arrows, which passed over him without effect, while I was wounded in two or three places; and finally, seeing that all danger from the archers was overpast, but that I, wounded and bleeding, was losing ground, and that the mad knight and the Breton were upon me, he wheeled round, and, coming back upon them as a hawk swoops upon the quarry, he dealt Sir Rufus such a blow on the helmet that the mad knight fell to the ground. De Gael attempted to escape a similar fate; but at that moment a man, in the guise of a yeoman, crossing the plain on a tall horse that seemed swifter than the wind, and shouting, "Death to the foreigners!" struck my enemy down with a huge bludgeon, and then made off as rapidly as he had come.

"The yeoman merits our thanks," said Bisset; "but to render them we have not time. On, on, Merley! Bear up, my boy, as you best can, and, ere long, Providence will guide us to a place of temporary security. Glad's my life!" he added, "I could hardly have believed that their hate was so rancorous. We were wise to fly."

At even we reached the forest, and discovered the hut of a forester, where Bisset claimed hospitality for himself and his esquire, who was wounded, telling a tale which, albeit they were somewhat shy, persuaded the inmates to give man and horse entertainment till daybreak. There he dressed my wounds, tended me carefully, and contrived so far to restore me that, next morning, I was ready to take the road. Ere departing, Bisset drew out his purse, and gave the forester's wife a golden piece.

"That," said he, "is the first piece of money ever coined in England. It is pure gold, and weighs two sterlings. It was coined by King Henry's command in 1257, and caused such discontent as to help to raise the storm that has now blown the crown from his head."

"What!" cried the woman in amazement, "will they take the king's crown from him?"

"If they leave him with his life it will be much," replied Bisset. "I well wot that they have done their best to take mine." And, with a wave of his hand, the knight moved on, and I riding by his side, we leisurely pursued our way.

"The woman's heart is evidently on the king's side," said Bisset.

"Naturally enough," observed I, "for it is her own cause; and, come what may, we must, in the end, prevail."

"I question it not," said Bisset; "and I am sure, anyhow, that the end is not yet. Meanwhile, I rejoice to have escaped the fangs of Sim's dragon."

"And wherefore," asked I, frankly, "when everything is lost, for the time, at least, should you rejoice to come alive from such a field?"

"Because," answered he, "I would fain go to France and see my daughter once more."

"And then?"

"Oh, then—mayhap I will then be game to face the great destroyer."

Our way lay almost straight from south to north, and the distance was not more than a hundred miles. Owing, however, to the necessity there was of ever and anon turning aside to avoid places held by the enemy, we had to traverse many miles in addition; and, moreover, we had frequently to halt to avoid danger, and to enable me, wounded and weakened as I was, to bear the fatigue. As last, on the evening of Tuesday, exactly a week after our attack on De Montfort's outpost, near Fleeching, we reached the south gate of Northampton, and demanded admittance.

No difficulty occurring, we rode through the archway of the tower, and were well received by Sir Patrick Chaworth, the governor.

"Welcome, my good friends, Sir Hugh Bisset and Master Merley," said he. "You bring news."

"Ay. Have you heard not the worst?"

"Only flying rumours of battle."

"It was a total defeat."

"And how came it about?" asked Chaworth.

"The prince was too fast; the king and the King of the Romans were too slow. And while the prince left the field in pursuit of the Londoners, De Montfort beat the two kings; and all three are prisoners."



"By the light of heaven!" exclaimed the governor, "Patrick Chaworth will never submit to Simon de Montfort."

"Nor will Hugh Bisset," said the knight. "De Montfort was always intolerable; and now, a conqueror, he will be worse. He will realize the adage of the ape, of which ancient writers remark that the higher it goes the more it shows its nakedness."

"Nor will Ralph Merley," added I, bitterly. "Never will I acknowledge a foreign adventurer as lord and master of England."

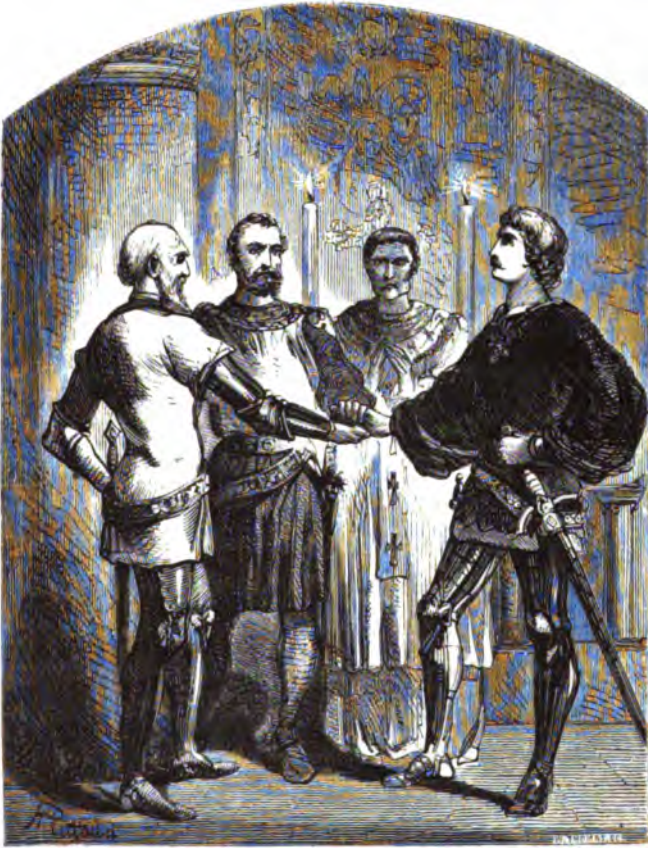
"Three determined men might overthrow him," observed Chaworth.

"Such things have happened," said Bisset.

"It shall be done!" cried I.

"We understand each other," said Chaworth.

And, on his invitation, we alighted and entered the tower; and there we abode for months, I passing my time principally among the books which, thanks to King Henry's bounty, the town possessed; and Bisset, guided by some hints given to him by Roger Bacon, an English friar, who possessed great stores of ancient learning, passed his time in trying experiments to find whether the composition made from saltpetre and other ingredients, and used in the East for fireworks, and in Europe to make squibs for children, could not be applied to hurl missiles from engines of war. In the evenings we walked on the wall, where the townsmen assembled in crowds to watch the comet that was visible from July to October, to ask each other of what new calamities this blazing star came as the herald, and superstitiously to associate it with the armament which Queen Eleanor was then fitting out on the coast of Flanders to rescue her husband and her son from the grasp of their enemies.



The Oath.

## XLIX.

## THE CONSPIRACY.

“**I** HAVE well-nigh lost all patience with those experiments,” exclaimed Bisset one day. “This composition began by attempting to blow off my left hand, and I believe it will end in

shattering my skull—if, indeed, the skull is not so thick as to be invulnerable. Merley, my son, I feel as if I were going to sigh for action.”

“For months I have sighed for action,” said I; “but as men of prudence we must bide our time—at all events, till we can tarry here no longer; and, in truth, I much marvel that De Montfort, when seizing so many of the towns, does not appear to take possession.”

“But come he will,” said Bisset; “and we need look for no other courtesy at his hands than that which Polyphemus promised to Ulysses—that he should be the last to be devoured.”

“A privilege more likely to be accorded to the garrison of Bristol,” I remarked; and at that moment Chaworth entered.

“My friends,” said he, “I bring news.”

“Good or bad?” asked Bisset.

“As you take it,” said Chaworth. “De Montfort is marching hither with the king to summon the town in the king’s name, knowing, as he full well does, that the king’s name is a tower of strength, against which the garrison will not fight; and, nothing being possible in the way of resistance, I, while remaining to surrender to the king the place which he intrusted to my keeping, counsel you, as marked men, to escape forthwith. Ere you go, however, let us arrange as to the part each of us is to take in dragging the usurper from the elevation which he, day by day, proves himself more unworthy to occupy.”

“Content,” replied both.

“But,” said Chaworth, “it shall never be told of me, enemy as I am to De Montfort, that I thirsted for his blood, or set snares for his life; therefore, in the first place, let us decide what is to be done with the man, in case of his falling into our power.”

"Tush!" said Bisset, laughing; "we can shave his crown and make a monk of him!"

"Or, what would be much likelier," said I, "we can appoint him keeper of the lions in the Tower!"

"We are so far agreed, then," continued Chaworth. "One of us goes to France to urge on the queen's operations; the second goes to Bristol to keep Sir Warren Basingbourne and his garrison steady in their resolution of 'No surrender;' and the third applies himself to liberating the prince, and placing him at the head of an army. Remember, as affairs stand, it is rebellion, and we stake our heads on the cast."

"It is certainly part of the body," said Bisset, "to which most men attach some value."

"I have so strong a conviction that mine is to go on my shoulders to the grave that I entertain no fear," said I; "and as for being a rebel, the idea does not frighten me, seeing that I possess the first qualification in having nothing to lose."

"So far, then, we are agreed," continued Chaworth, gravely; "and it only remains, under the circumstances, to cast lots to determine who is to play one part and who another."

Accordingly, we proceeded to cast lots, and silently abided the issue. It fell upon Bisset to repair to France; upon Chaworth to join the garrison of Bristol; and before me lay the prospect of journeying from place to place in disguise, with the object of setting Edward free, and placing him at the head of an armed force.

"I'll be sworn, Northman," whispered Bisset, "you would have liked to go where a certain noble demoiselle is to be seen; but you cannot grudge an old man the opportunity of once more seeing his only child."

"Assuredly not," said I, pressing the knight's hand.

"Merley, my friend," said Chaworth, compassionately, "you, albeit the youngest, have the most arduous and dangerous task of the three."

"The saints forbid that I should shrink either from labour or peril in a cause which I believe to be the cause of justice and patriotism," said I, calmly.

At a late hour that night, when the town of Northampton was hushed in repose, two knights and a squire entered the chapel of the castle; and there, after a priest had administered the sacrament, they solemnly swore, before the altar, never more, while alive and at liberty, to cease their efforts till they had brought about the downfall of Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester.

By early dawn, next morning, Bisset and I, Ralph Merley, left Northampton by the Durngate; he to make for the coast and take shipping for France, I to ride to the Marches of Wales, and rouse Roger de Mortimer and the other Lord Marches to insurrection. Chaworth awaited the coming of the king and De Montfort to surrender his post ere repairing to the castle of Bristol.



## L.

## THE REACTION.



T now becomes necessary to trace briefly, and with all the impartiality of which I, Ralph Merley, am capable, the events which succeeded the battle of Lewes.

Leaving the scene of his victory, and carrying the king with him, De Montfort, in the king's name, gained possession of town after town, and castle after castle. Having surrendered Tunbridge, at the king's command, Sir Warren Basingbourne crossed the country, and took possession of Bristol. Learning, however, that Edward had been sent as a prisoner to Wallingford, and that Wallingford was weakly guarded, Basingbourne marched thither to rescue the prince, and succeeded in winning the outermost wall; but being told that, "if he would have Sire Edward, he should have him shot from a mangonel," the royalist knight retreated to Bristol in dejection; and, soon after, Edward was, for greater security, removed to the castle of Dover.

At this time monks and minstrels were singing De Montfort's praises in the most servile strains, flattering him as the conqueror of two kings, and comparing him to Thomas à Becket, and even to the

Redeemer of mankind ; but none of the venal versifiers had a word of civility for the captive prince.

“ Be thou luf, be thou loht, Sire Edward,  
Thou shalt ride spurless on thy Lyard  
All the right way to Dover ward.”


But I write not as one lamenting that such should have happened ; for out of this evil good came. While flattery and the taste of power were proving fatal to De Montfort, Edward, saddened and depressed by adversity, thought and reflected in solitude till he began to comprehend the position of England better than any man living ; and, while the usurper was allowing his head to be turned by vanity and unbridled authority, the prince was planning the happiness of the country, and peopling his brain with the mighty projects of reform and reconstruction which have since been gradually matured and boldly executed for the freedom and welfare of the nation.

Meanwhile, the reaction came sooner than even I had anticipated. The barons, who had fought to establish an oligarchy, found, to their mortification, that they had established a despotism ; the traders, whose ships were constantly attacked by the pirates of the Cinque Ports, whom De Montfort had secured as allies, and with whom he durst not interfere, found trade with France and Flanders impossible ; and the populace, missing the prince, and deeming the king hardly treated, began to shout on all occasions that it was monstrous that Sire Edward should be kept in chains.

“ It is ridiculous,” said the barons, “ for a foreigner to presume to hold the sovereignty of the whole kingdom in his hands.”

“ And,” cried the traders, “ see what losses men are suffering from the pirates, whom the Earl of Leicester does not even attempt to restrain.”

“ Because the pirates are his own friends,” shouted the populace.



"But why is the prince kept in chains? and why is he not allowed, as heretofore, to show himself to the multitude? and why, above all, are the sons of this foreign earl allowed to go about oppressing and plundering as they please? why are they permitted to eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence?"

De Montfort began to perceive his danger, and, eager to allay the suspicions that were aroused, he assembled a parliament, and passed an order for setting the prince at liberty. After making Edward pay for this boon by surrendering to him the earldom of Chester, the earl granted the prince his liberty on condition of always remaining with his father, so that he found the change rather for the worse. In fact, as the king was led about by De Montfort wherever the earl went, and as Edward was under the necessity of accompanying the king wherever he was led, the prince's position was infinitely more irksome than when incarcerated at Dover.

It was now that De Montfort's difficulties came crowding upon him. While he wholly failed to satisfy the King of France and other European potentates that he had not acted with dishonour in rejecting the decision given by King Louis at Amiens, after agreeing to the arbitration, and while he was still alarmed by the movements of the queen, who threatened an attack, my efforts had not been in vain. I found Roger de Mortimer dull and discontented, and much under the influence of his wife, the Lady Maude de Braose, a woman of high spirit, and intelligence, and enthusiasm, and sighing away her soul, as I could easily perceive, for the return of the queen's court from France, and for the opportunity of showing off her graces at Westminster and Eltham. Such being the state of affairs, my task was not difficult, and, early in the spring, Roger de Mortimer and other Lord Marchers raised their banners and bade De Montfort defiance. The enterprise in itself was nothing; but it was of great



consequence, as it gave courage to the barons, whom De Montfort's pride had offended, to beard him. Three of his chief supporters were already in an ill-humour ; these were John Gifford, Robert Ferrara, Earl of Derby, and Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester.

Derby was the first to show his disdain ; and De Montfort, in order to terrify malcontents, ordered him to be arrested and imprisoned in the Tower. But the effect was not what he intended. Warned by Derby's fate, Gifford left London, hurried to the Marches, and exercised the influence he had acquired as Keeper of Dean Forest, as Governor of St. Briavel's, and as Lord of Brimsfield, to place himself in such a position as to defy De Montfort's vengeance ; while De Clare, who felt quite the reverse of safe in his magnificent mansion at Clerkenwell, began to turn his thoughts towards his Western castles, and to dream of hurling De Montfort from the eminence to which he had aided him to ascend.

It happened that De Clare and Henry de Montfort had agreed to a tilting-match, and that a tournament had been proclaimed to take place at Dunstable about the middle of February, 1265. Everything was prepared ; and, on the appointed day, a great number of knights and fighting men, and a multitude of the Londoners, assembled. Suddenly, however, De Montfort, who, by this time, was extremely jealous of De Clare's influence and popularity, forbade the tournament to be held, and menaced his sons with his utmost displeasure if they went to it.

"Disobey my orders," said he, "and, by St. James's arm ! I will put you where you will not have the benefit of seeing either the sun or the moon."

Disappointed in his wish to humble the young De Montforts, and exasperated beyond measure at the cause, De Clare, repairing to Tewkesbury, where stood his castle of Holme, and the great Norman

abbey where his ancestors reposed under stately tombs, had a meeting with Gifford in the Forest of Dean, and, resolving to break with De Montfort, sent to demand the King of the Romans and other prisoners taken by him and his knights at Lewes.

"It is surely enough for you," was De Montfort's reply, "that, in the battle, I saved both your life and estate."

"Now," exclaimed De Clare, "I repent me of ever having offended the king, and I am resolved to wipe off the disgrace;" and, without delay, he entered into communication with Roger de Mortimer, who still stood on the defensive, and who was perpetually importuned by his wife, the Lady Maude, to rise in arms, and not to rest till he had liberated the prince and restored the king.

At this stage of affairs, De Montfort proclaimed throughout the country that a tournament was to take place at Northampton on the 19th of April, and invited all knights to repair thither to show their prowess in the lists. It was deemed probable that De Clare would come with eagerness; but he, suspecting a snare, forbore from taking part in the business. The attendance of young knights and nobles, however, was great; and De Montfort, having made much of them, and put them into excellent humour, persuaded them to accompany him to the Marches of Wales; and, dragging the king and the prince at his chariot wheels, came to the city of Gloucester, with the object of bringing De Clare to submission either by argument or force.

While De Montfort was at Gloucester, where he remained ten days to repair the fortifications, I laboured night and day to bring matters to a crisis. From Gifford in Dean Forest to De Clare at Tewkesbury, and from Tewkesbury to Roger de Mortimer at Wigmore, I was constantly passing on, sometimes openly, and sometimes in disguise. At length, as De Montfort left Gloucester

to remove to Hereford, my expectations were raised to the highest pitch. I imagined that one part of my mission was as good as accomplished, and I believed that, ere night, Edward would be at liberty. De Clare, indeed, intended to surprise De Montfort on his way from Gloucester to Hereford, to rescue both the king and the prince, and to conduct them to Tewkesbury as guests.

I was not asked to take part in the enterprise, and did not deem it discreet to offer my services. I hurried, however, to Tewkesbury to ascertain the result, and when I reached that place I learned that the earl had ridden abroad. In my impatience I strolled into the abbey to examine the monuments of De Clare's ancestors, and especially that recently erected to the memory of his great father, Richard de Clare. It was a most stately tomb, ornamented with gold and precious stones, with the sword and spurs which the earl wore, with a large effigy of him in silver, and with this somewhat remarkable inscription :—

*“Hic pudor Hippolyti, Paridis gena, sensus Ulyssis,  
Æneæ pietas, Hectoris ira jacet.”*

I had just examined the monument, and was leaving the abbey, not without some recollections of the unfortunate Jew whom the great departed had allowed to remain in the pit till he was suffocated, when De Clare met me, looking somewhat crestfallen.

“Master Merley,” said he, “I grieve to say that my plan has miscarried.”

“Miscarried !” exclaimed I ; “surely, my lord earl, you are jesting !”

“No ; a mistake about the hour,” said De Clare ; “but fret not, I pray thee. We have De Montfort safe at Hereford ; he is as a deer in a buckstall. Already Gifford and my knights are seizing

the country around in such a way that Earl Simon shall not leave his present quarters, save at my pleasure."

"But how, my lord earl," asked I, half suspecting that I was being trifled with, "are we to get the prince out of his hands?"

"Be patient. My brother, Thomas de Clare, with whom De Montfort deems he can do as he lists, is now ours, and ours wholly. As you know, he is in attendance on Edward, or, rather, Edward is partly in his custody. Ere to-morrow, I will by his means ascertain what are the prince's wishes, and we can form our final plans, and then woe to Simon de Montfort and to his sons!"

"Unhappy man!" said I; "his day of power has been brief."

"Ay; let me see, Master Merley, how long may it be since that battle, when I was credulous enough to trust to his honour, and to give him a victory?"

"It is close upon a year, my lord," answered I, carelessly.

"A brief season indeed," said the earl. "Simpleton, to dream that any mortal man could long govern England who treated me, her foremost earl, with indifference!"

"It is no more than reasonable, my lord," I remarked, cautiously—for I was determined not to commit myself—"it is no more than reasonable that England's foremost earl should exercise his legitimate interest in the state."

"By-the-bye, Master Merley, I believe you have this day stood at my father's tomb; you will remember that to that great man I swore, on his death-bed, not to depart from the spirit of the Provisions of Oxford."

I refrained from any reply.

"You answer me not!" exclaimed he, sharply and sternly.

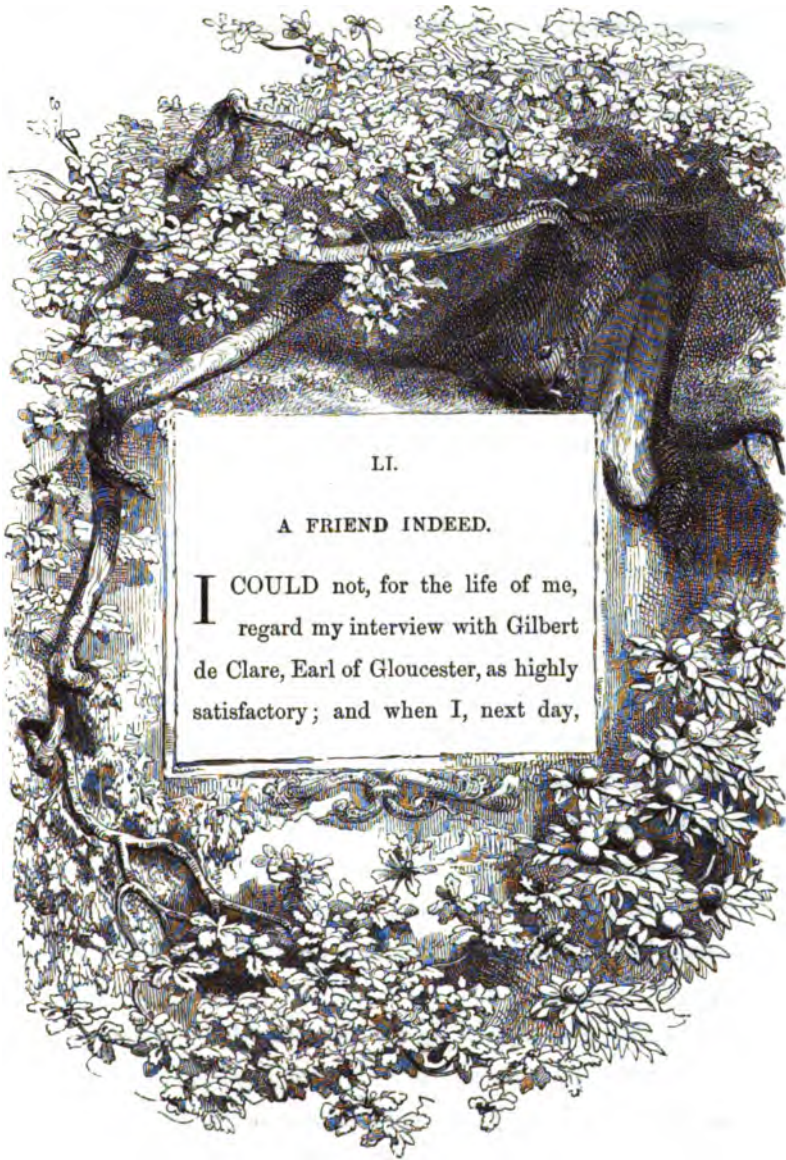
"My lord," said I, as I shook my head in sad reproof, "raise no new difficulties, but consider the state of England. For nearly two

years civil war has been carried on by the adherents of the king and the partisans of De Montfort ; castles have been attacked and defended, and granges have been plundered, and fields ravaged, and cattle carried off to supply provisions to besiegers and besieged ; even the houses of the poorest agricultural labourers have been rummaged, and, it shames me to say it, plundered of the very straw that served for beds. Yeomen and peasants are suffering from the effects, and the whole land is impoverished."

"It is true."

"Doubtless," continued I, drily, "the prince will consent to any reasonable compromise ; but there are articles in what you call the Provisions of Oxford of which I, Ralph Merley, say frankly, that, rather than counsel Edward to consent to them, I would recommend him to send round the ancient proclamation, 'Let each man that is not a nothing, whether in town or country, leave his house and come ;' I should rather, I simply mean, counsel him, as heir of the Confessor, to throw himself on the people, and trust to them making him victorious over his enemies."





rode away from Tewkesbury, I was not in the very best humour with "England's foremost earl." I almost regretted, however, having spoken so plainly as to the Provisions of Oxford, though I believe I said nothing more than the prince said when it was put to himself ; but I vowed internally not to be outwitted, and it was with a firm resolution to such an effect that I pursued my somewhat long journey to the Castle of Wigmore.

I confess that at first, from De Clare's failure to rescue the king and prince, and his sudden allusion to the promise he had made to his dying father, I was inclined to suspect that he was wavering between the two parties. But a little reflection enabled me to see that his breach with De Montfort was too serious to be easily repaired ; and, mastering my suspicions, I arrived at the conclusion that he was only endeavouring to make his aid appear the more valuable, in order to have the privilege hereafter of magnifying his services and claiming high rewards.

"By the Holy Cross !" said I, half aloud, at the selfishness and revengeful spirit of the man, "I am not thus to be imposed on. What is our position ? By this time the lords of the North are ready to mount ; the barons of Ireland await but a summons to cross ; Warren and Pembroke may ere this have landed ; the queen is still on the coast of Flanders ; and the people of the country in some places are ready to rise. Gilbert de Clare, great as is his feudal following, is more in my hands than he dreams of ; and when the prince is free, it will be for Edward to dictate and not to accept terms."

I was so occupied with my reflections, that for some time I gave little heed where my horse was going ; and when night began to fall, and I slowly raised my head and looked around, I observed with no small surprise that a horseman in the dress of a yeoman, riding a

tall steed, was almost at my side. I made the discovery so suddenly that I could hardly persuade myself that he had not emerged from the bowels of the earth ; and as strange legends of the Evil One himself appearing in such a shape, under such circumstances, to tempt men to their destruction, floated through my memory, I started perceptibly.

"A merry night, young esquire," said the rider.

"A merry night in truth, good yeoman," replied I, recovering myself ; "and such as we have a right to expect in the month of May."

"Be under no alarm," said he.

"It is not my wont to be alarmed at the presence of a single man, be he friend or foe," replied I, haughtily.

"You seem quite unconscious," he observed, as if wishing to change the subject, "that you have lost your way."

"Indeed," said I, making an effort to laugh ; "now it seems to me that before hazarding such a remark you should know where I'm going ; and that is a point about which a stranger can know little and care less."

"And yet you will admit my guess to be somewhat near the mark when I say that you have been to Gilbert de Clare at Tewkesbury, to insure the downfall of Simon de Montfort, and that now you are going back to Wigmore to tell Roger de Mortimer and his spouse that matters have not quite gone as you could have wished."

"My friend," replied I, with difficulty repressing my amazement, "such a mission as you describe would be one of singular peril ; and I am as yet neither so old nor so weary of life as to expose my neck lightly to the hazard it would involve."

"There are some men who believe that they are destined to pass unscathed through such dangers on their way to greatness ; and if



Master Merley is not such a man, the tongue of rumour belies him."

I uttered a low exclamation of surprise, and the idea that I was in the company of the fiend again crossed my mind ; but I observed that the stranger was guiding me into the right path for Wigmore, and I augured favourably from the circumstance.

"However," continued he, "I wish not to pry into your secrets ; I wish rather to aid your projects, being such as they are, and to aid you on easier terms than Gilbert de Clare ; for I will make no conditions, and I will ask no reward."

"And what motive, then, would prompt you ?"

"My hatred of Simon de Montfort."

"Has he done you wrong ?"

"You may have heard of Simon Curlevache, the citizen of Leicester from whom De Montfort, before going to Rome to get a dispensation for his unholy marriage, in 1238, extorted five hundred marks ?"

"It was a scandalous piece of injustice."

"When he returned, I went to his castle of Kenilworth, and I asked him to restore what he had taken, and he added insult to injury."

"And then ?"

"And then I was a ruined man, and took to the greenwood."

"Ho, ho ! A forest outlaw !"

"Even so ; and listen. Some years since, a young clerk of Oxford, flying the king's anger, was captured by the band of which I was captain, and somewhat well treated under the greenwood tree for his own and his grandam's sake. Mayhap Master Merley, being himself a scholar, might have some acquaintance with the youth ?"

"What !" exclaimed I, "are you the frank outlaw who enter-

tained me so well, and had me conducted on my way to Linden ?”

“The same.”

“Give me your hand,” said I. “Now I trust you.”

“Your doing so may prove of more advantage to the king’s cause than you imagine. I have formed a plan for the prince’s escape !”

“What is it ?”

“I ride the swiftest horse in England ; you might have remarked his speed, when, as you, in the company of Hugh Bisset, were flying, wounded, from Lewes, I dashed across the plain and felled your outlandish pursuer, who, however, still lives to kill you if he can.”

“I well remember,” said I, “and see, moreover, that I am more beholden to you than I could have fancied. But the plan ?”

“The prince’s health has been somewhat tried by captivity ; and De Montfort, alarmed lest anything should happen, and the world cry out, ‘Poison,’ or ‘Foul play,’ has granted his captive permission to ride abroad daily for recreation.”

“Well ?”

“If a yeoman throws himself in the prince’s way, and offers to sell his horse, the prince might mount to try the horse’s paces.”

“Reasonably enough.”

“Let him, when he mounts, give my horse the rein and the spur, and he will reach Wigmore without the chance of being caught. I will stake my head on the result.”

I mused.

“But,” continued the outlaw, “you will say, ‘How is the prince to be informed of this ?’ My answer is, ‘Give me a scroll for him, and within twelve hours I will put it into his hands, and nobody but himself be the wiser.’”

I thought for some time, and calculated the chances of success,

while the outlaw rode silently by my side. After awhile, he broke the silence.

"Now," said he, "let us, for the present, drop the subject ; but you can take twenty-four hours to consider, and then meet me under yonder tree," he added, pointing to a spreading beech, "and give me your answer."

"Agreed," said I ; "meantime, accept my thanks."

"Nay," replied he, jocularly, "I will rather wait and have Prince Edward's thanks when he is free ; and hark ye, Master Merley, I can do more than this. If you raise the royal banner in actual war to overthrow De Montfort, I can bring a body of men who would march against the Devil himself at your bidding, if I told them, once for all, that you were worthy to lead."

I pushed on as rapidly as I could to Wigmore ; and, after stating drily the result of De Clare's enterprise, I related my strange adventure with the outlaw, and his offer of enabling the prince to escape on his horse. Roger de Mortimer was rather inclined to throw cold water on the scheme ; but the lady, whose imagination was fascinated with the romance of the business, not only entered into it heart and soul, but argued, in defiance of every possibility, that the man would turn out to be some loyal earl or baron in disguise.

"Speaking of loyal earls, Master Merley," said Mortimer, "I have sure intelligence that John de Warren and William de Valence have landed with a strong force in Pembrokehire."

"It is well," said I ; "the sooner we have them here so much the better ; for certain am I that, with this outlaw's aid, I'll have the prince at liberty ere the month of May expires."

"May your expectations be fulfilled !" said the baron.



## LII.

## PRINCE EDWARD'S ESCAPE.

**I**T was Thursday, the 28th of May, 1265, and the sun shone fair on the banks of the Wye; and on that day, I, Ralph Merley, riding a white horse, was posted on the verge of Tullington Wood, and looking down the hill on the grassy space that lay between the situation I occupied and the city of Hereford.

At length, as I earnestly watched, my eyes were gladdened with the sight which, of all others, I desired to see; for, soon after noon, Edward, mounted on Harfagher, my own gallant grey, and escorted by Robert de Roos, one of the four young Anglo-Normans who had

the prince in custody, and attended by his guards, issued from the gates of the city to recreate himself with equestrian exercise. Nothing could have appeared more improbable than an attempt at escape; and Robert de Roos, who, of course, was responsible for the safe return of the prince to Hereford, would have scorned the idea of such a thing happening.

On reaching Widmarsh, however, Edward proposed that his guards should ride matches and test the comparative speed of their horses; and, the proposal being hailed with enthusiasm, matches were made, race after race was run, and the prince rode several himself, till, as the shades of evening were falling, every horse was tired except Harfagher, whose speed had not, for obvious reasons, been put to the trial, and the berry-brown steed of Robert de Roos, which however, impatiently pawed the ground. Indeed, De Roos, having entered into the spirit of the business, was not in the least disinclined to display his own equestrian skill and his horse's speed, and he cast his eyes ever and anon towards the grey, as if to challenge Edward to a course.

By this time, attracted by the noise and cheering, spectators, both on horse and on foot, had assembled on Widmarsh to witness the sport; and from among these forth rode a yeoman on a tall iron-grey steed.

"My lord," said the yeoman, addressing the prince, "this young lord here pats his horse's neck and brags of its speed, and I doubt not it has its swiftness of foot; but, if you will honour so poor a man as myself by mounting my iron-grey, I will wager anything I may be worth on my own beast's chance."

"Assuredly, yeoman," answered Edward, "if my Lord de Roos offers no objection to a match, I offer none to riding your iron-grey against his berry-brown."

"Right willing am I," said De Roos ; and the prince, giving my grey into the charge of the yeoman, mounted the yeoman's horse.

At this moment I was watching everything that took place with intense interest, and, moving forward to Tullington Hill, I took off my bonnet and thrice waved it in the air ; and Edward, observing the signal, moved forward, and then, as if assured of the mettle of the horse he bestrode, turned round to Robert de Roos and his guards.

"Gentlemen," said he, gaily, "I beg to say to you farewell. It has been my misfortune to trouble you too long ; I intend not to burden you longer with my company. My regards to my cousin De Montfort, and say he is likely soon to hear from me." And, giving the iron-grey the spur, the prince bounded off at a pace which caused his guards to stare with amazement, and my heart to beat high with hope.

"He is off !" cried some, making an attempt to follow. "There is treason here."

"Where is the villain yeoman ?" shouted others, who seemed to consider pursuit hopeless.

When they looked around, the man was nowhere to be seen.

"The yeoman gone, and with a horse which belongs, I know, to Master Merley !" said De Roos. "I see it all ; we have been grossly deluded ;" and he pointed towards Tullington Hill, which Edward was rapidly approaching, and Tullington Wood, out of which Roger de Mortimer and his riders began to issue.

"Pursuit is vain, so let us back to Hereford," said De Roos. "The sooner my Lord of Leicester knows of this mishap the better, and the speedier will be the punishment of those who have been fool-hardy enough to indulge in such a caper, be they princes or peasants."

And, turning their horses' heads, the party rode somewhat slowly and sadly towards the city on the Wye, to inform De Montfort that his captive had escaped.

Meanwhile, Edward, having ascended the hill, was among his friends, and great was the joy of all present as we conducted him to the castle of Wigmore. Next day, however, we removed to Ludlow ; and thither, as time passed, came Gilbert de Clare, and John Gifford, and John de Warren, and last, but not least in Edward's estimation, Robert de Burnel.

Fortunately, no difficulties arose. The prince, almost coinless and destitute of means, was in need of Gloucester's aid ; and De Clare saw clearly that if he did not frankly join Edward he would fall, as it were, between two stools. A full reconciliation took place ; and after the prince—acting on Burnel's advice—had sworn, in the event of victory, to cause the ancient laws of the realm to be observed, and evil customs to be abrogated, and to use all his influence with the king to banish foreigners from the royal council, and to exclude them from the custody of the royal castles, the earl supplied him with money and with all things necessary for the great enterprise on which they were entering.

Rapidly forces now gathered to the prince's standard. Gifford's name attracted a multitude ; the name of Simon Curlevache, the outlaw, was not wholly impotent. From the counties of Hereford, Worcester, Salop, and Chester numbers flocked to join us ; and towns and villages, cities and castles, poured forth their inhabitants to join our standard.

For a time the movements of De Montfort were kept secret. Ere long, however, I, through the agency of the outlaw, caught some importance intelligence, and, riding straight to Ludlow, sought Edward's presence.

"You bring news, Merley ; I read it in your countenance."

"Yes, my lord ; news of import."

"Out with it. This is no time for ceremony."

"In the first place, De Montfort has addressed letters, in the king's name, to the bishops of the province of Canterbury, enjoining them to excommunicate your highness and all your adherents."

"The bishops will not obey ; and, if they do, their fulminations will be ineffectual ; for the country is in earnest. But go on."

"De Montfort, in order to prevent the increase of your forces, has addressed a summons, in the king's name, to the king's tenants *in capite*, commanding them, on pain of treason, to come immediately, armed, to Worcester."

"Worcester ! the very place on which I have fixed as my headquarters. I intend to march thither forthwith. They must choose another rendezvous."

"Doubtless they will select Gloucester."

"That cannot be. Gloucester is necessary to my operations, and I have already formed a plan for seizing it. But proceed, Merley ; we are not bound to find them a rendezvous. What further hear you ?"

"Orders have been despatched to Simon de Montfort, the younger, to abandon the siege of Pevensey, where he has had little success, and to repair to London and elsewhere, with a view of raising an army to join his father."

"Ha !" said the prince, thoughtfully, "I now begin to see how matters are to be ; and we shall have De Montfort playing the part of Fabius Cunctator till his son's arrival. Well, I object not ; in fact, he will thereby be playing our game. But, meanwhile, were it not well to send some trusty partisan to keep an eye on the younger Simon's motions ?"



"My lord," replied I, "anticipating your wishes, I have already sent Simon Curlevache."

"Thanks, Merley," said the prince; "it was well thought of. You could not have done better. Robert de Burnel has talked to you."

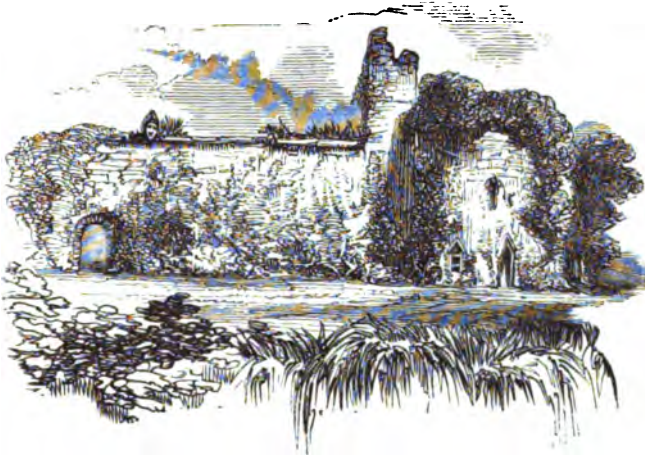
"Yes, my lord."

"He is of opinion that in this war you could serve the king's cause better with your head than your hand."

"My lord, I should be willing to serve the king's cause in whatever way I could do it most service; but ——"

"Ah! I see," said the prince; "I forgot you have not yet won your spurs. Well, well, you must not be balked of your opportunity. However," he added, still more seriously, "men say that, as warriors, we showed more valour than discretion at Lewes; and we must redeem our reputations."





## LIII.

## SIEGES AND SKIRMISHES.

IT seems that Simon de Montfort, on hearing of Edward's escape, somewhat hastily concluded that the prince had gone to join Earl Warren and William de Valence, of whose arrival in Pembroke-shire he had already been informed. Ere long, however, De Montfort received intelligence that made him take a more serious view of the crisis. As yet, indeed, he was not fully aware of the genius of the man whom he had to encounter ; but he knew quite enough of Edward to feel much alarm ; and it was with less than his wonted confidence and bluster that the earl prepared to remove from Hereford to Worcester.

It was now that De Montfort began to comprehend his adversary's

power and his own position. Before the time he had appointed for the assembling of his forces in Worcester, Roger Clifford, and Roger Laybourne, and the Lords of the Marches, had rushed to arms, seized the castles between Chester and Hereford, and brought a host of warriors to the prince's standard, to which, also, the old Lord Beauchamp of Helmsley sent three of his sons to fight for the king ; and, thus reinforced, the prince advanced on Worcester. No opposition, worthy of the name, was offered ; and, taking possession of the castle, he rendered De Montfort's position still more difficult by digging holes in the fords of the Severn, removing the ferry-boats, and making the passage well-nigh impossible.

I now took up my quarters in the castle of Worcester, and applied my whole energy to the business of the war. Besides forming a body of horse, of which Bisset, on arriving from France, was to take the command, I was occupied night and day with the prince's affairs, and was gaining intelligence as to De Montfort's movements. I have already mentioned that I had despatched the outlaw who had rendered such good service to keep an eye on Simon the Younger ; and, besides, I had in my pay Ralph de Arderne, one of De Montfort's adherents, and a woman named Margoth, who went about disguised as a man, both of whom kept me fully informed as to the state of affairs in the enemy's camp.

Meanwhile, Edward had not lingered in Worcester. Indeed, it was not with such a foe as De Montfort that we could afford to trifle. On learning that we had seized Worcester, the earl appointed Gloucester as his rendezvous, and sent Robert de Roos and William de Vesci, brother of the Lord of Alnwick, to hold the castle and town ; but, in the first week of June, Edward and John Gifford appeared before the walls, and it soon became apparent that two such men could not long be kept outside. In fact, after a siege of

two days, Gifford forced his way through the wall of the abbot's orchard; and Robert de Roos and William de Vesci, abandoning the town, threw themselves into the castle.

At this stage, Edward and Gifford parted company; and, while the prince remained to besiege the castle of Gloucester, the Lord of Brimsfield departed to keep watch on De Montfort, who had by this time removed to Monmouth, and received reinforcements from Llewellyn of Wales. Edward soon reduced De Roos and De Vesci to such extremities that they yielded the castle of Gloucester. Gifford, appearing before Monmouth, day after day offered De Montfort battle. But the earl, as if resolved to hazard nothing, made for De Clare's castle of Hulka, and took that stronghold.

It must have been admitted, even by De Montfort's warmest partisans, that at this time his position was the reverse of pleasant; for mighty hunters were on his track, and they were already encompassing him within their toils. At Gloucester, Edward had been joined by De Clare and his fighting-men; and, thus reinforced, the prince marched towards Hereford, hoping to surprise De Montfort and rescue the king. But, finding that the earl had left Hereford, and carried the king in his train, Edward followed, and with little difficulty recovered the castle of Hulka.

Alarmed, but still with faith in his destiny, De Montfort marched farther into Wales. Having taken the town of Newport on the sea, and despatched orders to Bristol to send ships of burden to convey his army thither, he prepared to escape by water. But in this intention he was foiled; for the prince had notice from Sir Patrick Chaworth, who at this period joined him with the men that had formed the garrison of Bristol. Resolved on defeating De Montfort's design, Edward sent to the mouth of the river some of De Clare's

light galleys, which, suddenly attacking the Bristol ships, sank eleven, and forced the others to sail back.

Meanwhile, De Montfort remained at Newport. There, however, he was not long undisturbed. Arriving at Newport, Edward and De Clare fought with the earl's men on the bridge, and, driving them back, hoped to take the town and seize their potent adversary. But, able and courageous as they were, De Montfort contrived to elude them. Suddenly setting fire to the bridge, he forced the prince to order a retreat ; and, availing himself of a dark and stormy night, stole away from Newport, reached the territory of Llewellyn, threw himself into the arms of the Welsh chief, and, entering Glamorganshire in his company, ravaged, with fire and sword, the lands of De Clare. But De Montfort's soldiers grumbled at the Welsh fare ; and the earl, perceiving the necessity of getting back to Hereford, marched his army through woods and solitary places, and succeeded in baffling the pursuit of his enemies till he found himself once more in the city on the Wye.

At Hereford, however, De Montfort knew that he could not long remain with safety ; and he longed earnestly to pass the Severn, and form a junction with the force which his son, Simon the Younger, was bringing to his aid. But to cross the river was no easy matter ; for Edward had, by this time, returned to Worcester ; and he had, moreover, determined that Simon the father and Simon the son should never have an opportunity of uniting.





Winchester Cathedral

## LIV.

## ARRIVALS AT WORCESTER.

ON the evening of Friday, the 31st of July, Edward had ridden out of Worcester to reconnoitre ; and I, Ralph Merley, having spent much of the day in drilling into discipline my troop of horse, now not innumerable, was occupied with charts, and maps, and muster-rolls, when one of the prince's pages, who had been placed in attendance on me, announced Giles Merley ; and one of my Northern cousins entered.

"Welcome, kinsman," said I, rising. "The retainers of Sir Roger de Merley have been so long waited for, that I well-nigh despaired of their coming."

"Better late than never," replied Giles ; "and at length they are here, and at the prince's service."

"I trust," said I, "that Sir Roger de Merley comes with them ; otherwise men may deem that he had enough of fighting at Lewes."

"You seem unaware," was the reply, "that Sir Roger hardly survived the wedding of his daughter to the young Lord Twenge, that he now sleeps with his fathers at Newminster, and that you are chief of the name of Merley."

"A barren honour."

"Hardly, so long as the manor of Linden is yours."

"Well, mayhap you are in the right, kinsman ; but of such matters we will speak anon. Meantime, say what force you bring to the royal standard ?"

"A hundred horsemen, well mounted and accoutred," replied Giles ; "and every man taller and stronger than his neighbour."

"A goodly addition to our cavalry," said I, "and one that the prince will appreciate."

"I learn that Prince Edward is not at Worcester."

"No ; but every moment I expect the sound of his trumpet to intimate his coming. I will, meanwhile, as far as your men are concerned, make arrangements for their accommodation."

I accordingly went to the courtyard, and was carefully examining the new-comers, most of whose faces I well knew. Among them I, somewhat to my surprise, recognised Walter the Farrier and Gamel Goodrick.

"Well, good friends," said I, "you have left your homes to fight for your country."

"We have no homes," replied they, sullenly ; "our homes have been destroyed by a rabble led by Ribaut, the mad knight, and De Gael, the Breton, and we come to fight for revenge ;" and as one glanced at his iron club, and the other at an ancient battle-axe, they looked truly formidable.

As we spoke, the prince, returning to Worcester, entered the castle yard; and observing me, as he rode up to the castle, he reined in.

"Whom have you here, Merley?" asked he, curiously.

"My lord, they are tall Northmen, led hither by my kinsman, Giles Merley."

The prince turned to the young esquire, conversed for a moment or two with him, expressed his regret at the loss of so loyal an adherent as Roger de Merley, and ran his eye keenly over the horsemen, who still sat silent and steady in their saddles.

"By Holy Edward!" he said, "these are the very men I want—the men of whom I have dreamt. I have an enterprise in view in which each of them will do knight's service. Let them not waste their energy in any petty adventures; but look to them well that their wants are cared for, and that they are kept in readiness to ride at my bidding whenever the occasion for their services presents itself."

"It shall be as you command, my lord," replied I.

"And what, think you," asked Edward, "was the bribe given by De Montfort to Llewellyn to purchase the Welsh chief's support in this war?"

"I have heard that it was the hand of his daughter Eleanor."

"It seems," said the prince, "that the lady was thrown into the bargain; the real bribe was nothing less than a charter under the Great Seal, restoring to the Welsh chief the lands which he vainly imagines to be his rightful inheritance as having been possessed by his ancestors."

"I hardly deemed De Montfort so unscrupulous as so to sacrifice England's interests."

"It is as certain as that you live; and, under pretence of restoring Llewellyn's rights, Earl Simon has given up five of the king's castles,



which the Welsh are levelling with the ground. But why vex ourselves with this at present? What news have you from our gallant outlaw?"

"News of moment, my lord. After leaving Pevensey and repairing to London, Simon de Montfort the younger went to Winchester, and being denied entrance he took the city by assault, plundered the citizens, and massacred the Jews. From Winchester he went to Oxford, where the townsmen, warned by the fate of the men of Winchester, gave him a friendly reception. From Oxford he went to Northampton, and at Northampton at the head of a strong force he still was—but watched by the outlaw as a mouse is watched by a cat—when a messenger was despatched."

"Ho, ho! at Northampton, and at the head of a strong force!" said the prince. "It is not likely that Simon the Younger will remain long at Northampton under such circumstances. Remember, Merley, that when the hour comes not a moment must be lost. Everything depends on being prepared to act on the instant."

"Certainly, my lord."

"He will not find us so easily dealt with as the Jews of Winchester," said Edward, smiling; "but meanwhile attend to the comfort of your young kinsman and the men whom he has brought south; and then attend me. I would fain communicate some projects of importance in which these Northern men can render great service."

Edward, as he spoke, rode on; and I, having done what in me lay to put my kinsman, Giles Merley, and his northern men at their ease, followed the prince to the apartment where he was taking counsel with Robert de Burnel. About an hour later the sound of trumpets announced the arrival of John Gifford. At midnight De Clare rode into Worcester. The forces of Edward, of Gifford, and De Clare when united formed a formidable army. De Montfort knew our

strength. I took care that he should, through his barber, Nicholas, on whom he chiefly relied for intelligence, and whom I had the means of constantly misleading. But the great Lord of Leicester was not daunted. Indeed, his heart still beat high ; and he had strong hopes of yet achieving a crowning victory.

Weary with toil and thought I, after leaving the prince and Burnel, was on the point of throwing myself on my couch, and seeking that refreshment of spirit which sleep, and sleep only, can give, when I was surprised to hear footsteps approaching my chamber. The hour was late ; and I had no wish to be disturbed ; but what was my surprise and delight when I looked up and recognised Hugh Bisset !

“Northman, Northman !” cried the knight, “beshrew me if I have ever been quite myself since we parted. Let us part never more, say I, till we have put old Sim under the king’s feet ; and then I care not if I sing ‘*Nunc dimittis*.’”



## LV.

## NEWS AND PREPARATIONS.



T was Saturday, the 1st of August ; the day was far spent and evening was coming on apace, when I was interrupted in the midst of labours which hourly, as affairs hurried to a crisis, grew more arduous, by the arrival of Simon Curlevache, who communicated intelligence of such importance that I, deeming it no time for ceremony, led him to the presence of the prince.

"Welcome, brave man !" said Edward, as the outlaw bent his strong knee ; "you bring me tidings of the foe. Speak quickly and with brevity, I pray thee, for if the matter be as I fancy, every moment is of value."

"My lord," replied the outlaw, "Simon de Montfort the younger has marched from Northampton to Kenilworth, men gathering to his standard as he advanced."

"Good," said the prince ; "I rejoice that he is so near ; no news could please me better."

"With Simon the Younger, as he is called," continued the outlaw, "are many men of high rank, as the Earl of Oxford and Robert de Vipont and Hugh Neville, and several knights-bannerets."

"Oxford is young," said the prince, musingly, "and may be

brought to a better sense of duty to his king and country. As for Vipont and Neville, they are incurable rebels. But proceed."

"For the present," added the outlaw, "they are undecided whether to march straight to Hereford to relieve the Earl of Leicester, or to march to Worcester and take you by surprise."

"*Sang de Dieu !*" exclaimed Edward, throwing back his magnificent head, "they shall not need to come hither to find me, for I will go forthwith and seek them. Anything," added he, half aside, "is better than to be between these two armies. But from that inconvenience I will soon free myself and my adherents."

"Never, my lord, can you do so with more ease than this night," continued the outlaw. "Ere I gave my steed the rein and spur to come hither, the men were dispersing to enjoy themselves at the neighbouring villages and granges; and what is worthy of note is that the leaders, as it seemed to me, were so certain of victory, that they were about to celebrate their triumph before gaining it."

"You know enough of Kenilworth to act as a guide?"

"Ay," answered Curlevache; "I have studied De Montfort's castles so closely, and know them so well, my lord, that I could act as a guide, even if blindfold."

"It is well," said Edward. "Rest and refresh yourself, then; and ere long you will be summoned to perform a duty which, I promise, will not go unrewarded. Merley, see that this brave man is cared for, and that my Lord of Gloucester, and Warren, and the other chiefs are summoned. It is well to take counsel with them in an affair so important."

I left the prince, and, having seen that his orders were obeyed, looked to the comforts of the brave outlaw. In two hours I was roused by the sound of trumpets, and, at the same instant, by a summons to appear before the council which the prince was holding.

I went without delay, and found myself in the presence of Edward, who, with Burnel at his right hand, was surrounded by Gilbert de Clare, John Gifford, Earl Warren, Roger de Mortimer, Roger de Clifford, and Roger Laybourne. I bent my head as I entered, and looked to the prince to indicate that from him alone could I receive orders.

"My lord the prince," said I, "what may be your good pleasure?"

"Master Merley," replied Edward, addressing me, "after due consideration, it has seemed good to myself, as acting for the king, and to the noble lords here assembled, to proceed forthwith to surprise the baronial host at Kenilworth, and it has seemed good to me and to them to intrust the van to your leading."

I bowed low to the prince, but did not answer.

"Your duty requires caution and secrecy," continued he, "and it is well you should have with you men on whom you can perfectly rely. Now, I mistrust not the horsemen whom you have rallied to the royal standard; but my confidence will be all the greater if the duty which they undertake is shared by those valiant Northern men whom your young kinsman has brought from the baronies of your ancestors; wherefore," added the prince, "I have already given orders for their being placed under your command. You will remember that my object is to fall upon the enemy by surprise, and that the king's cause will be more advantaged by taking men captive than by killing them. Now away; and Simon Curlevache can, I doubt not, so guide you, that you will be among the rebels ere they awake from their slumber."

I wasted no words in reply; but in another hour the royal army was in motion; and I, with the outlaw on my left hand, was riding in front of the van. Immediately behind came the two bodies of horse under my command—one composed of the tall men of the

North, under Giles Merley—the other composed of my hopeful recruits, under Hugh Bisset. There was, luckily, no jealousy between them; for Walter the Farrier and Gamel Goodrick served as connecting links between the men of the North and the men of the West; and as for the leaders, Bisset and Giles Merley had, during the day, formed over their cups an easy kind of friendship, which made everything pleasant.

It was a beautiful August night; and in the pale moonlight we moved rapidly forward.

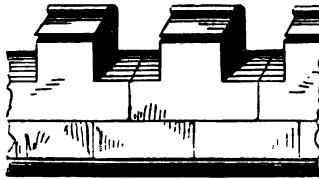
"Were I De Montfort I should fly," remarked the outlaw.

"Why?"

"Because, after his son's army is destroyed, he has no chance of victory; and, if he risks a battle, he cannot escape."

"Perchance the prince may grant him quarter."

"Nay, young squire, it is not the prince's to grant."





Prince Edward knighting Ralph Merley

LVI.

OUR RIDE TO KENILWORTH.

**I** RALPH MERLEY, would fain give the reader some notion of  
 , Kenilworth, with which, in other days, King Henry had gifted  
 Simon de Montfort, and at which Simon the Younger now lay

encamped, with an army gathered in the king's name, for the purpose of utterly ruining the king's prospects.

It was a magnificent feudal pile—that castle of Kenilworth—and had a banqueting hall capacious enough to feast several hundreds of persons; a park that covered forty acres of ground, and was well stocked with deer; and manors and a chase that extended over twenty miles of country, and abounded with beasts of game.

And Kenilworth, which had been much beautified by the king during De Montfort's exile, had been strongly fortified by De Montfort since his return, and furnished with wondrous engines of war, which he had obtained, at great cost, probably with the view of making a desperate defence in case of an emergency. Its walls were of prodigious thickness; one of its towers, known as "Cæsar's Tower," was considered impregnable; and it was encompassed by a double row of ramparts, and by a broad moat, called "The Pool," which was half-a-mile in length, and, at some places, a quarter of a mile in breadth.

I have never been able to understand why, on that night, the baronial leaders could have exposed themselves to so much hazard as they did. Being too numerous to be cooped up in the castle, it was natural that they should have encamped in the park; but why they should have dispersed over the country, and kept so careless a guard, I have never been able to understand. But certain it is that, either from utter recklessness or a false feeling of security, or, possibly, some ridiculous feeling of contempt for their princely foe—whose abilities in war they still undervalued—no precautions had been taken to guard against a nocturnal attack.

It was early dawn on Sunday morning when we approached the baronial army. My anxiety was intense as I rode along, with Hugh Bisset, who was all eagerness, on one side, and Simon Curlevache,



all calmness, on the other. Suddenly we came upon a herd of cattle, which, disturbed by our approach, began to bellow loudly.

"This is most unlucky," said I, in grave alarm.

"Yes," remarked Bisset; "the monster Cacus, according to the Roman poet, was betrayed to Hercules by the lowing of oxen, and we may have a similar fate."

"Fear not," said the outlaw. "I will be bound, from what I saw ere leaving, that by this time there is not a sentinel who is not either away from his post or asleep on it."

"That were too much to expect."

"Credit me, nevertheless, that by this time one half of them are sleeping under the influence of strong drink, and the other half, under the like influence, prying about after the maids of Warwickshire."

And soon, indeed, it appeared that the outlaw was right. Not a being appeared to oppose our progress; and, silently, stealthily, gliding through the trees, I led my companions forward; and we found ourselves almost in the camp of the enemy ere any alarm was given. Even then no resistance of the slightest consequence was attempted. Aroused suddenly from repose, captains and their men started up, stared wildly round, and uttered shouts of surprise and consternation as the tall Northern men rode in among them, and the other horsemen followed in their track.

"Dogs!" cried Bisset, "you are the men who raised your banners against the king at Lewes."

"And who burned my dwelling in the Strand!" cried Walter the Farrier, wielding his iron club.

"And who tore down and destroyed the White Horse hostelry!" shouted Gamel Goodrick, who had armed himself with a huge axe, which Ulph, his ancestor, carried when the Saxons took the city of York.

I do not think that I ever drew my sword. Indeed, I was more anxious to stop the carnage than to add to it. Never can I forget the scene which the baronial camp presented. Men of various ranks were flying, or attempting to fly, hustling each other, and falling over each other. Most of them were quite defenceless; many were in their shirts; and some in their single garment were running with their other clothes under their arms. But they found escape as impossible as resistance, and barons and knights were surrendering without striking a blow.

"We have prisoners and to spare," said Bisset, coming up to me; as I, having dismounted, stood on the margin of the moat called "The Pool."

"Yes," I said; "but see you not that their leader has escaped? By the Holy Cross, it vexes me sore!"

"*Pardieu!*" exclaimed Bisset, "we can surely spare young Sim. We have more prisoners than King Henry took at Northampton."

At that moment the prince rode up.

"Your work has been well done, Merley," said he—"well done, as I live!"

"It grieves me, my lord," replied I, "that I could wish it had been better done."

"Wherefore? What prisoners have you taken?"

"The Earl of Oxford is among them; and Robert de Vipont; and Hugh Neville; and about seventeen knights-bannerets."

"And what," he inquired, anxiously—"what of Simon de Montfort the Younger?"

"My lord," answered I, "it irks me to say that he has escaped to the castle;" and I pointed to the boat which was conveying the young noble, half-dressed, towards the fortress.

"I grieve to hear it," said the prince, "for he may yet give us

much trouble ; but," added he, "such things will happen. You have well and valiantly executed your duty, and it is but just that you should have the highest reward which a prince can confer. Kneel."

I knelt.

"Ralph Merley," said the prince, having given me three blows with the flat of his sword on the shoulder, "in the name of God, of St. Michael, and of St. George, I dub thee knight ; be brave, adventurous, and loyal. Rise up, Sir Ralph Merley, lord of the manor of Linden."

I rose, and, as I did so, Edward, grasping my arm, pointed to the feudal stronghold of De Montfort.

"It was to that castle," said the prince, speaking to me, and looking across the moat, "that, at Christmas, they conducted me as a guest, to make me feel the more strongly that I was a captive. They little thought, when they were carrying me hither, under what circumstances I should next come."

"No, indeed," said I.

"The King of the Romans and Henry of Cornwall," continued the prince, "are still there as prisoners ; but mayhap it is as well that, after we have conquered, there should be men who can aid in the work of conciliation with all the better grace for not having participated in the final struggle, which cannot fail to be sanguinary."

Having thus spoken, Edward paused and looked around, and, observing that nobody was within hearing, he resumed—

"I would fain save De Montfort's life if I could."

"I doubt not your will in that respect, my lord ; but I frankly own that, with such angry men about you, I see no possibility."

"It is too true ; and yet Robert de Burnel will not credit it," said the prince. "Gilbert de Clare, Roger de Mortimer, and John

Gifford each considers his quarrel with De Montfort mortal ; and they all believe that his destruction is their safety, and that his safety would end in their destruction."

" I fear, my lord, you must leave the ambitious earl to his fate. He has sown the wind, and he must reap the whirlwind."

" Something may yet be done," said the prince ; " but, meantime, let us back to Worcester, wrest the truncheon from De Montfort's grasp, prostrate the barons—who would parcel out England among them, and make us a nation of slaves—and see what can be done towards raising up a free commonwealth, headed by a popular king, and guarded by just laws, wisely administered."

" 'Tis a glorious vision," said I.

" May we live to realize it !" exclaimed the prince.





Kenilworth Castle.

## LVII.

## A PAUSE AND A NIGHT MARCH.

ON Sunday we returned to Worcester with our prisoners ; and Edward, who had ridden with the Earl of Oxford, and held much conversation with the young nobleman by the way, was naturally impatient to pursue his success, and bring De Montfort to a decisive conflict. Late in the evening he came to my apartments in the castle, and the page, who lay at my door, roused me from a sleep into which I, overcome by fatigue and anxiety, had fallen.

"It seems," said the prince, as I sprang up and he entered, "that De Montfort has moved from Hereford. On learning that I had left Worcester, he hastened to pass the Severn, and reach Kempsey, a palace of the Bishop of Worcester. But, when he hears of my return, at Kempsey he will not remain."

"No," said I, after a moment's reflection ; "his object, obviously,

is to reach Kenilworth, or, at least, to establish a communication with his son, whose defeat he suspects not. Most likely he will march in an eastward direction, so as to approach Warwickshire ; and it were well, therefore, to move in a parallel line."

" True ; you are right so far ; you confirm my ideas," said Edward ; " but I cannot venture to take any leap in the dark ; the stake is too great. Wherefore I pray you, as soon as morning dawns, to mount and reconnoitre."

" Without fail, my lord."

" Affairs are now so delicate that I can only act on intelligence upon which I can confidently rely."

" By daybreak, without fail, I will be in the saddle," said I ; " and depend on my, as early as possible, bringing the intelligence you desire."

" Thanks, Merley ; you are worth your weight in gold," said the prince. " If I had gone to another man, he would have put twenty questions before comprehending my object, and then raised as many difficulties before undertaking the duty. Rely on my gratitude. For the present, good night ; and may your sleep prove refreshing!"

I returned to my rest, and, rising at early dawn, summoned my men, and left Worcester. I soon found it necessary to be cautious. As I approached Kempsey, it became quite clear that De Montfort was hastily leaving, and it was necessary to ascertain for what place he was bound. I felt some difficulty as to the means of obtaining accurate information ; but at length, in a skirmish with a party of the enemy, led by Humphrey Bohun the younger, I brought off a prisoner—which was my object—and prepared to return to Worcester.

I started as the prisoner was brought forward ; for I imme-

diately recognised Stephen Fitz-Scrob ; but I gave no other sign of recognition.

"The Earl of Leicester has left the manor of Kempsey this morning," said I.

"Yes—with the king."

"You will please inform me for what place he has marched."

"To Evesham."

"Enough. Gamel Goodrick !"

"Yes, my Lord Ralph."

"I commit this man to your hands ; and, if the intelligence he has just given prove false, you will hang him on the nearest tree."

"Readily, my lord," replied Gamel. "I always said his carcass was destined to feed the crows."

"For once," said I, examining Fitz-Scrob's countenance, "he has, I believe, spoken truth."

"But," exclaimed Fitz-Scrob, a terrible thought occurring to him, "what if my Lord of Leicester should change his mind ?"

"I have nought to do with that," replied Gamel ; "I will only answer for this, that my Lord Ralph will not change his mind."

"Enough : I abide the issue," said Fitz-Scrob, in a voice which quite confirmed me in my opinion as to his veracity ; and I hastened to return to Worcester.

"Well," inquired Edward, as I presented myself at the castle to report the result of my expedition, "what tidings ?"

"My lord," replied I, "De Montfort has marched from Kempsey, and is on his way to Evesham."

"Thanks, Merley ; I see it all," said the prince. "Now give out that, in the evening, we march towards Bridgenorth."

A council of war having been held, orders to prepare for a march

were issued. Everywhere throughout Worcester there was bustle and busy preparations for departure. In the evening the prince mounted to lead his army out of the loyal city, Gilbert de Clare heading the second division, and Roger Mortimer the third.

Ere setting forth on a journey which was fraught with the most important consequences, Edward thanked me, in the king's name, for the services I had rendered the royal cause at Kenilworth; and, after alluding in complimentary terms to my new rank, he placed under my orders a considerable body of cavalry which had been raised by Chaworth, in addition to those commanded by Hugh Bisset and Giles Merley.

"Sir Ralph Merley," said the prince, "will understand that he is to be ready to act on any emergency, and take his orders from me; and I much mistake if I do not, ere long, find him work which will give him an opportunity of proving to the world whether or not he worthily wears the spurs of knighthood."

After having gone some way on the road leading towards Bridgenorth, the prince called a halt.

"Methinks," said he, "we have now gone far enough to elude the vigilance of De Montfort's spies. Our enemies," he continued, "can no longer escape us. All the manœuvres that human art can devise will not now serve the Earl of Leicester. To-night he lodges in the abbey of Evesham; to-morrow he must fight or yield."

A loud cheer answered the prince's speech; and ere it died away we turned our faces in the direction of the foe, and, guided by the light of the moon, which shone, through the trees on grass, and pool, and stream, pursued our night march through the fair and fertile vale of Evesham.

"Northman," said Bisset, riding up to me in the grey of the morning, "I give you joy of your elevation, and of the prospect you



have of rising still higher. I verily believe I was wrong, and that the fair countess may be yours yet."

"You think so?"

"Many a man has got an earldom for far less than you have done since we parted at Northampton."

"My ambition does not take that shape," said I.

"One question in your ear," whispered Bisset: "what is to be the fate of old Sim?"

"I fear," replied I, "that you will have no opportunity of shaving his crown and making a monk of him."

"Nor you," said he, "of appointing him keeper of the lions in the Tower."

"It seems to me," remarked I, "that he is doomed."

"And I confess I regret to hear you say so. I thought, maybe—but it was a mere fancy—that this reserve of horse was designed to save him."

"It would be a grand achievement, and would read well in the chronicles in time to come," said I; "but his fate does not rest with us."

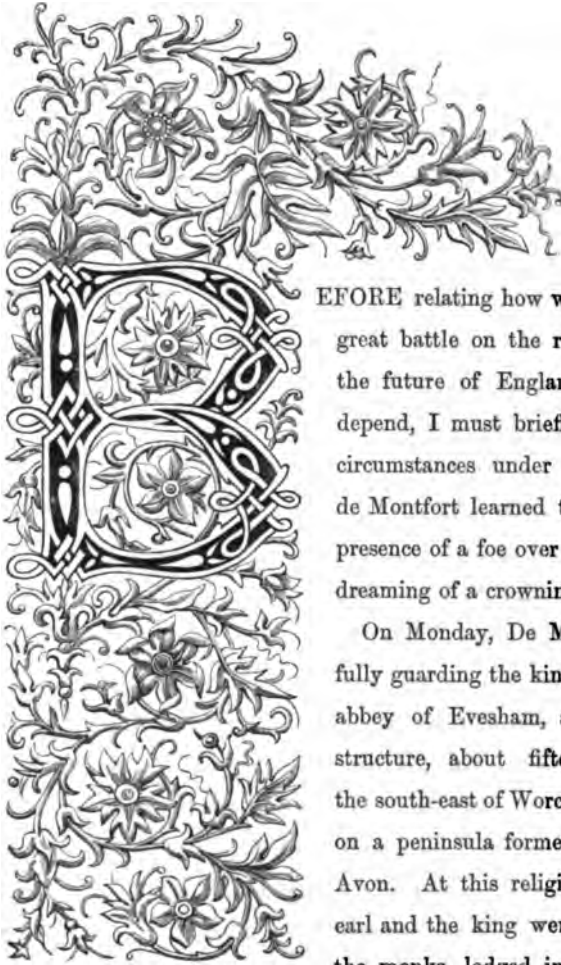
"With whom, then?"

"With the men who, this time last year, were his friends, and whom he made his enemies," answered I, in a low voice.

"In that case," observed Bisset, in a tone of resignation, "it is vain to talk; you are right in saying he is doomed;" and as the knight spoke he fell back to his men.

## LVIII.

## DE MONTFORT AT EVESHAM.



BEFORE relating how we fought that great battle on the result of which the future of England seemed to depend, I must briefly explain the circumstances under which Simon de Montfort learned that he was in presence of a foe over whom he was dreaming of a crowning victory.

On Monday, De Montfort, carefully guarding the king, reached the abbey of Evesham, a magnificent structure, about fifteen miles to the south-east of Worcester, situated on a peninsula formed by the river Avon. At this religious house the earl and the king were received by the monks, lodged in the spacious

chambers of the great bell tower, and entertained with all hospitality.

On the morning of Tuesday, the 4th of August, 1265—a day likely to be ever memorable in the annals of England—De Montfort, who had passed a sleepless night, was musing more soberly than was his wont, when Nicholas, his barber, who also acted as a spy, came to him with a cloud on his brow.

"What tidings?" asked De Montfort.

"Many armed men come from the South," answered Nicholas, who was skilled in armorial bearings, "and, as well as can yet be ascertained," added he, doubtfully, "they display your banners."

"My son, doubtless," exclaimed De Montfort. "But return, and look around, lest, by any chance, we should be deceived."

"Alas! noble earl," cried Nicholas, returning with dismay on his countenance, "the banners I see are not your son's, but your foe's. On one side is that of the prince; on a second, that of Gilbert de Clare; and on a third, that of Roger de Mortimer."

"The prince, De Clare, and Mortimer!" exclaimed De Montfort, aghast with surprise and horror. "Then," added he, "may the Lord have mercy on our souls! for our bodies are Edward's."

"Despair not," said Henry de Montfort, the earl's eldest son, who had entered; "the issue of battle is ever doubtful."

"I do not despair, my son," replied De Montfort. "But I tell you this, for your warning, that your presumption and the pride of your brothers have brought me to the peril you witness."

As De Montfort spoke, the chamber began to fill, and around him crowded those barons of England whose pride was highest and whose names were greatest. Hugh, Lord Despenser, Ralph, Lord Basset, John de Vesci, Nicholas Segrave, William of York, Humphrey Bohun the younger, and John Fitz-John who, albeit sharing De

Clare's discontent at the conduct of De Montfort after Lewes, had so strong an aversion to the royal cause, that, when the crisis came, he drew his sword for the man whom he had branded as a usurper.

"I am quite prepared to fight and to fall for God and justice," said De Montfort, looking round. "Nevertheless, I give every one who wishes full leave to depart; and, in truth, my lords," he added, addressing Hugh Despenser and Ralph Basset, "I entreat you to escape, and save yourselves for better times."

"No," said they all; "we will not desert you."

"My lords," cried Sir Rufus Ribaut, who was pacing the floor in a state of high excitement, "let us not fail, ere going to battle, to insure ourselves one enemy the less by killing the king. I myself will do the deed."

"Peace, Sir Rufus," said De Montfort; "this is unseemly."

"I will kill him in the battle," growled the mad knight.

"Before we encounter the foe," continued De Montfort, "I enjoin every man humbly to confess his sins, and then let all such as are inclined to die for God and justice prepare for battle."

"I mislike so much talk," murmured John Fitz-John; "I mistrust men whose deeds square not with their words."

"I believe," added De Montfort, again addressing his friends, "that my doom is to die in the battle. But I repeat my conviction that, in such an event, I die for the cause of God and justice."

"Verily, a consolatory doctrine," murmured John Fitz-John. "But where was his love of justice when he refused us our share of the spoil and prisoners taken at Lewes?"

"*Pardieu!*" muttered Conan de Gael, who stood by De Montfort's side; "this man talks calmly of dying. But, if he falls, what the deuce is to become of me?"

"I could credit De Montfort's sincerity," whispered Sir Rufus Ribant, "if he would consent to my killing the king."

"My lord and father," said Henry de Montfort, raising his voice after a painful pause, "methinks—all things taken into account—it would be better for you, and better for your friends, to save yourself for another day. I will remain, and, by God's grace, sustain the conflict."

"Far be it from me," exclaimed De Montfort, "to bring an illustrious career to such a close. Never shall it be told that I left my friends in the hour of peril."

Having thus expressed himself, De Montfort prepared to face Edward; and, after confessing to the Bishop of Worcester, who was in attendance, and taking the sacrament, as was his wont before going into battle, he armed for the encounter.

Meanwhile, the little town of Evesham was in commotion; trumpets sounded; war-steeds were saddled; warriors buckled on their coats of mail, their surcoats, and cointises; men mounted in the market-place; and steeds neighed at the clang of arms and the ringing of bridles. At length all was ready; and De Montfort, having given his standard to be carried by Guy Baliol, a foreigner, like himself, placed the king on his right hand, armed in mail exactly like his own, and mounted on a coal-black steed like the barb which he himself was then in the habit of bestriding.

"I trust I'll not kill the wrong man," muttered Sir Rufus Ribant, when he observed this; "but he this day treated me badly, and, anyhow, there will be an oppressor the less in the world."

"By St. James's arm!" exclaimed De Montfort, as he rode forth and gazed on the prince's army, "these men come on well; they have learned this from me."

It was still early in the day when Edward reached the rising

ground that overlooks the fair abbey of Evesham, and arrayed his forces for the conflict that was to decide the fate of England ; and almost as the prince, riding Grey Lyard, had set his men in battle order, De Montfort and the baronial host were seen issuing from the town.

By this time, I, Ralph Merley, mounted on Harfagher, which I had kept for this day, was posted, with the cavalry under my command, somewhat to the right of the prince's division ; and I confess that I could not repress an exclamation of involuntary admiration as the baronial warriors, bestriding prancing steeds and splendidly armed, came caracoling along. Many of them were still too young to be girded with the belt of knighthood ; but, on that account, they the more easily believed that everything grand and honourable was associated with the cause of which they were the partisans ; and they the more readily swore to fight for it to the death.

From an early hour the day had been so cloudy and oppressive that everybody predicted a storm ; and when De Montfort had marshalled his men, and entreated them to fight bravely for the cause of God and justice, large drops of rain began to fall, and the distant roll of thunder seemed to forbid clarion and trumpet to sound an onset. Indeed, there was a long pause ; and it was not till noon had passed that the embattled hosts, after having stood for hours face to face, threw off hesitation and came hand to hand.



The Abbey Gateway—Evesham.

# LIX.

## OUR CHARGE.

**I**T was two o'clock ; and the air was still oppressive, the sky still lowering, when Philip Lovel, whom I have mentioned as one of Edward's squires, rode up to the spot which I occupied.

"Sir Ralph Merley," said he, "I bring you commands."

"From my lord the prince?"

"Yea. Mark you, on the edge of yonder wood, a body of foot numbering, it may be, a thousand, and apparently Welsh?"

"I have watched that wood for an hour," I replied ; "and much mistaken am I if about it there are not more men than meet the eye."

"However," said Lovel, "my lord the prince commands you to charge that body of foot with your cavalry, and to disperse them ; but no pursuit."

"The prince's command shall be obeyed," said I; and as the squire disappeared, I rapidly communicated the order to Chaworth, to Bisset, and to Giles Merley; and ere long we descended the slope, and were encountered by Humphrey Bohun the younger, and William of York, who seemed in command of the post.

"Traitors!" they shouted, "remember your overthrow at Lewes, and know that we shall again prevail."

Disregarding this bravado, I charged right forward against the shield of Humphrey Bohun; while Chaworth and Bisset and Giles Merley, the first with his lance, the second with his battle-axe, and the third with his sword, penetrated the Welsh ranks, and scattered the frightened Celts to the right and to the left.

So far all was well; and I having almost unhorsed Humphrey Bohun, wheeled round with a view of taking him prisoner. But my grey steed being more fierce than his wont, from having for weeks been kept in the dark, was slow to obey the rein; and in the meantime Simon Curlevache, leaping to the ground, attempted to secure the heir of Hereford. In the operation, however, he met with a fatal interruption.

In fact, William of York, observing the peril of his comrade-in-arms, spurred with hot haste to Bohun's rescue, and sternly passed his sword through the body of the outlaw. I was too late to save, but not to avenge him. Indeed, he had scarcely fallen, mortally wounded, when William of York, already seriously hurt by a quarrel from a cross-bow, fell before my lance never more to rise.

"Heed me not, young knight," said the outlaw, guessing my intention to dismount and aid him. "I die content. I feel that my revenge is at length secure, and that De Montfort must soon follow me. Revenge! revenge!" and, almost as the words hissed from his lips, Simon Curlevache breathed his last.



It was at this moment, while my riders were still pursuing the Welsh, and while both armies were keenly watching us, that I discovered a movement in the wood which confirmed all my apprehensions ; and, rapidly indeed as if by magic, thousands of armed men crept from among the trees like bees from their nest, and covered the plain that lay between us and the prince's army. Released by William of York's interference, Humphrey Bohun had placed himself at their head, and by his side I, not without a start, recognised Sir Rufus Ribaut and Conan de Gael.

Nor was this the worst. In spite of all pursuit having been forbidden, many of our men had chased the enemy from the ground, and when I rejoined Chaworth and Bisset, few indeed remained save the Northern horse under Giles Merley, and men like Walter the Farrier and Gamel Goodrick, who were too strongly bent on revenge to give way to excitement.

"Merley, my friend," said Chaworth, "we are lost !"

"'Tis true," said Bisset. "Hector, when he awaited the approach of Achilles, at the gate of Troy, was not in greater peril. Mark how they are surrounding us. Gad's my life, they encompass us about !"

"However, we can cut our way through them," said I ; "and for my part, I so intend. Here we have no Achilles to encounter, but a host of Welshmen, headed by a mad knight, a beggarly Breton, and a braggart baron who has twice stooped his crest beneath my hand. Giles Merley, set your men in order for a charge. My merry men, shall it ever be told in the North that we feared the faces of Welshmen ?"

"Never !" was the reply from a hundred tongues.

I now called to mind the celebrated feat of arms performed by Richard Cœur de Lion at Joppa, and that I had, as a boy in the

tilt-yard, been marvellously dexterous in the imitation ; and, moreover, that I rode a steed in which my confidence was thorough. No sooner, therefore, were the Northern men ready for action, than, deliberately laying my lance in rest with one hand, and drawing my sword with the other, I put spurs to my horse, and with a shout of "Strike for King Henry and the crown ! A Merley ! a Merley !" charged right upon the crowd that had gathered to stop us on our way.

Never can the impression I produced with my two weapons be forgotten while a warrior lives who fought at Evesham that day. In vain Humphrey Bohun threw himself across our path ; in vain Sir Rufus Ribaut and Conan de Gael hounded on their myrmidons ; in vain the Welsh plied their slings and drew their bows—neither darts nor arrows availed aught. Striking right and left I inspired such terror, that leaders and followers shrank and recoiled from my arm ; and, closely supported by Chaworth, whose lance was dyed red in Welsh gore, and by Bisset, whose battle-axe was doing fearful execution, I at length had the satisfaction, through showers of darts and arrows, of bringing the riders of Giles Merley through all dangers up the hill, and of regaining in safety my place near the prince's ranks.

A mighty cheer greeted us on our return.

"*Sang de Dieu !*" exclaimed Edward. "Never has it been my fortune to witness a more gallant charge."

Having regained my post, I turned to look at the ground over which we had come ; and it was, indeed, with feelings of wonder that I contemplated the swarming host of foot through which we had, by sheer strength of arm, forced a way. Not fewer than two thousand men were under Humphrey Bohun's orders ; and albeit they were, for the most part, Welsh, and not to be compared to

English soldiers, yet when I saw them forming in order, and presenting a formidable front, and as I remembered Edward's words on the previous eve, I had the vanity to exclaim—

"By the Holy Cross! the knight who heads a charge of a hundred riders through such a multitude *does* prove whether or not he is worthy to wear spurs of gold."

But I soon found that that terrible charge had cost me my horse. Severely wounded, Harfagher sank almost ere I had warning to dismount; and I was mourning this mishap when Giles Merley spurred forward to where I was keenly watching the movements of the foe.

"Kinsman," said he, "it grieves me to tell that Sir Hugh Bisset is sore wounded."

"Mortally!"

"Yes, he will hardly survive till sunset."

I hastened to the rear, and found Bisset in the hands of a surgeon, who speedily discovered that the point of a broken lance was buried in the knight's breast.

"I care not," said Bisset, resignedly; "let me live to hear that Sire Edward has conquered, and I die content."

At this moment I approached, and kneeling down, took Bisset's hand.

"My brave friend!" murmured I; and I could say no more.

"Nay, nay, not a tear for me!" he exclaimed. "I am dying, where I have ever made the best figure—on the battle-field; and you will tell my daughter how I died, and be kind to the orphan for her father's sake. Promise."

"I promise faithfully," said I.

"Beshrew me, Northman," continued he, "if it was not well for Achilles that he was not among our foes. Ill would it have fared with him had he come in your way or mine. As for you, you are

on the road to renown. As for me, I am on my passage to another world. I shall never meet foeman more ; but I can say, '*Militavi non sine gloria.*'"

Unhappily, Bisset was not destined to survive to hear the result of that great fight at Evesham. His voice, as he uttered the last words, was lost in a groan that rattled in his throat ; and, fixing his glazing eye on me, as if he would have said more, he threw up his arms, and died.



## LX.

## THE BATTLE OF EVESHAM.



HE conflict, which had been so bravely begun by the adventure that cost Bisset his life, had become general by the time I mounted a fresh steed and resumed my post at the head of the Northern horse.

While Roger Mortimer and Gilbert de Clare advanced, slowly and cautiously, on De Montfort's baronial chivalry, who met them with shouts of "Traitors and perjurers!" Edward, whose keen eye took in every part of the array of his doughty foe, recognising the fact that the infantry division posted at the wood, under Humphrey Bohun the younger, formed, in reality, one of the chief defences of De Montfort's centre, determined forthwith to drive them from their ground. Mounted on Grey Lyard, the prince led his riders down the slope, and made one of those terrible charges which, at Lewes, had swept baron and burgher before him. Nothing could have been more complete than his success on this occasion; and as I watched, and he spurred on, his lance in rest, and his grey steed snorting fire, and as he broke into the ranks of foot, the Welsh, startled as pigeons are when the hawk swoops suddenly upon them, bore back in terror, and, in spite of Humphrey Bohun's efforts, fled fast away.

"Now," muttered I, "the saints forbid that the prince should repeat the blunder of Lewes!"

But for such an eccentricity Edward was in no mood. Having unhorsed Bohun and taken him prisoner, the prince calmly turned his head and led his force up the hill, seemingly content with the success he had already achieved. Many of his riders, however, went off in pursuit, and woe betided the unhappy Welsh. Some ran towards the abbey; others, turning towards the Avon, attempted to descend to the meadows and cross the river at Offenham-ferry. But few escaped. Many were cut down by the swords of the pursuers; many were drowned in the Avon; and several are said to have expired of sheer fright.

It seemed that De Montfort attached extraordinary importance to this wood. No sooner did the prince retire than William, Lord Mandeville, and Thomas, Lord Hestelee, at the earl's suggestion, attempted, with a body of horse, to recover it. But, quick as thought, I, at the prince's beck, dashed down the hill, totally dispersed them, and put them to flight, not, however, until Mandeville and Hestelee had both fallen beneath the weapons of the Northern men.

Meanwhile, De Montfort, at the head of the baronial chivalry, succeeded in holding his ground against Mortimer and De Clare. But the destruction of his infantry rendered the earl's plight much more desperate than before; and he rapidly formed his army into a solid mass, the more effectually to resist the attacks he anticipated. Being chiefly composed of noblemen and their retainers, all men of high courage, and mostly well mounted, the baronial host was still very formidable; and De Montfort, as he scanned his lines, spoke in accents of hope.

"Be of good cheer," said the earl. "Remember that our foes are

traitors and perjurers, and that we fight for God and justice. See, they come, putting their trust in the arm of flesh ; let us trust in the Lord of Hosts, and may St. James be our aid !”

As De Montfort concluded his harangue, Edward, who had halted for a brief period on the other side of the ravine to re-form his men, moved forward to the encounter with trumpets sounding and banners flying, and, after a breathless pause, rushed, with his characteristic impetuosity, upon the baronial phalanx. But now he had to do with antagonists very different from the Welsh ; every man fought dauntlessly and well ; and, though a multitude of the enemy fell, the prince, not without the loss of Hugh de Troia and Adam de Redmarsh, two brave and loyal knights, retired as if baffled.

“The dogs give way !” cried some of De Montfort's more fiery and enthusiastic partisans.

“Nay, by the arm of St. James !” exclaimed the earl, “they retire to prepare for a more energetic spring ; this is, doubtless, part of a plan of Sire Edward's for destroying our army without wasting his own.”

And the truth of De Montfort's remark became evident ; for the pause was several times repeated ; and, after each pause, the attack was renewed with greater vigour and with infinitely more effect than before.

Having, ere this, received instructions to keep the Northern horsemen together, and not on any account to be lured from my post, I was rather a spectator of, than an actor in, the exciting scene that was being enacted ; and I was intently watching the game that was being played—the stake being simply the Confessor's crown—when Walter the Farrier and Gamel Goodrick, one brandishing his iron club, the other his huge axe, approached me.

"Sir knight, since that is now your style," said the Farrier, bluntly, "our patience is worn out, and we must take leave of you."

"Yes, my Lord Ralph," said Gamel, "we have work to do elsewhere."

"What work?" asked I, with curiosity.

"I intend not to leave this field without the head of Conan de Gael, who hounded on the rabble rout to burn my tenement in the Strand," replied the Farrier.

"And I," said Gamel, "intend not to leave this field till I prove, with my axe, whether Sir Rufus Ribaut, who egged them on to tear down my hostelry, is man or devil."

"My good friends," said I, "calm yourselves. My lord the prince is conquering as fast as his best friends could wish; and through the rents already made in yon baronial host I discern the prospect of peace and prosperity."

"But our revenge?" cried Walter.

"Ay, our revenge?" echoed Gamel.

"Farrier," I said, "be guided by me, and leave this Breton to his fate. Trust me, you will rebuild your forge not the less blithely that his impure blood is not on your hands; and you, Gamel Goodrick, be wise, and meddle not with the mad knight; it is not chancy, my friend, to harm men whom Heaven has made as he is."

"As for Conan de Gael," replied Walter, "he it was who planned the death of the four citizens slain at Lewes, and had them shut up in De Montfort's car. They were my friends, and the friends of John de Gizors; and I want an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

"And," added Gamel Goodrick, "as for this knight's madness, I have ever looked upon him as more knave than fool."

Almost as the brothers-in-law departed to execute what they



appeared to deem their missions, I perceived that an important movement was taking place. After one of his fierce onsets, under the influence of which De Montfort's army had gradually diminished, Edward fell back to make one of his pauses; and, at the same time, Mortimer, De Clare, and Gifford, extending their lines from the rear till both divisions, wheeling round, joined at the extremities, enveloped the remnant of De Montfort's army as in a serpent's fold.

Evening was approaching; and the thunder, which, during the day, had growled at a distance, was coming nearer and nearer, when at the moment in which Mortimer and De Clare cut off De Montfort's last chance, Philip Lovel dashed up to me in some degree of haste.

"Sir Ralph Merley," said the squire, "I bring you the prince's commands."

"To look to the king's safety?" said I, guessing for what service I had been reserved.

"A good guess, I must own," replied Lovel; "many a warrior will envy you the commission. But how fares Sir Hugh Bisset? The prince grieves to hear of his mishap."

"The brave knight," I replied, "has gone the way of all flesh. He only desired to live long enough to hear the shout of victory, but Death would not wait till Edward had conquered."

"In truth, De Montfort has made an obstinate struggle."

"I ever gave him credit for courage."

"But all his efforts to turn the tide of battle were in vain."

"Ay; vain as the words of King Canute when he ordered the sea to flow backwards."

"But the prince did move backwards," said Lovel.

"Doubtless," I replied; "but not as Canute wanted the sea to do. His movements are as the reflux of the advancing, not of the receding, wave."

I now drew my saddle-girth, ordered fifty of the Northern horse to follow, and spurred across the field to execute my orders. Nor was I a moment too early. Finding that his situation in the baronial army gradually became more perplexing and perilous, the king, only escaping assassination at the hand of Sir Rufus Ribaut because the mad knight was at the time fiercely attacked by Gamel Goodrick, made an effort to reach Prince Edward's lines; but a peasant of Worcestershire, who had come to fight with the Beauchamps, encountering the king, and mistaking Henry for De Montfort, rushed at him, and having wounded him in the shoulder, brought him to the ground.

"Die, traitor!" cried the peasant, shortening his spear to pin the king where he lay.

"Hold! do not kill me!" cried Henry. "I am your king; I am Henry of Winchester!"

Fortunately I heard the words, sprang from my steed, and, rescuing the king, remounted him, and, leading his black horse by the rein, conducted him to the prince.

"My lord and father," said the prince, after he had knelt to receive the king's blessing and meet greetings had passed, "I recommend to your favour my good knight, Sir Ralph Merley, who has rendered the royal cause services that can hardly be repaid."

"By God's head, young knight!" exclaimed the king, turning kindly towards me, "I owe you some reparation for cold countenance in other days, as well as reward for the services rendered; and, if I may judge by the way in which your name is mentioned by our enemies, I would say that never had prince a more valuable adherent."

"The young knight," said the prince, anxiously, "may yet render

an important service. He may save De Montfort's life, if commissioned by your highness so to do."

"As you will, Edward," replied the king, but in a changed, and by no means cordial, tone.

"Away, Merley!" said Edward; "you have not a moment to lose—already I fear it is too late;" and, as the prince spoke, I spurred my horse, and rode, through flashes of lightning, over a field strewn with corpses and slippery with blood.

"Merley, my friend, tell me about Bisset," said Chaworth, whom I encountered by the way. "Nay, man, there is no need of haste now—the struggle is over."

"Not quite," said I, as I pointed to a spot where centred still a war.

"Too late," cried Chaworth, understanding me; "you would only peril your own life if you made the attempt. The battle is won, and, their blood being up, they are bent on consummating the victory."



## LXL

## THE END OF DE MONTFORT.



FOUNTAIN, standing upon the rising ground to the north of Evesham, and bearing an inscription inviting the weary pilgrim to drink, marks the spot where, baffled and beaten, but still unconquered in spirit, Simon de Montfort, hard pressed, and literally encompassed by the followers of Mortimer, De Clare, and Gifford, whom his pride had mortally offended, took his last stand, with his eldest son Henry and the flower of that Norman baronage, whose chiefs, since the battle of Hastings, had ruled England with iron hand. Night was approaching; every hope of victory had vanished; all chances of escape had been cut off; and the great earl, whose word so lately had been more than law, saw nothing but the threatening faces of fierce and implacable foes.

At this moment I pressed forward and endeavoured to make myself heard. Vain was the effort as if I had forbidden the lightning to flash, or the thunder to roll. My voice was drowned in the din and clangour that heralded a renewal of the struggle. Nor, as yet, did De Montfort show the least inclination to yield. Guy Baliol, his standard-bearer, having fallen, he gave his standard into the hands of Conan de Gael; and, still scornfully facing his foes and

branding them as "traitors and perjurers," he prepared for a last struggle.

And fierce De Montfort's last struggle was. Never, indeed, in his best days, had his courage and prowess been so conspicuously displayed. Again and again he threw himself on his foes; and it must be confessed that the boldest of them seemed to shrink from a close encounter with the man whose utter destruction they had sworn to accomplish.

But De Montfort's last struggle was not more fierce than hopeless; and, when his horse was killed under him, his son slain, and his friends slaughtered by his side, he seemed to think he had done all that a brave man ought.

"Is there any mercy for me?" he cried, looking around.

"Yes!" shouted I, with all my might; but a hundred faces turned menacingly upon me, and hundreds of warriors bore me backwards from the spot.

And one voice said, "No mercy for such a traitor!"

And a second voice said, "No mercy!"

And a third voice said, "None!"

And I, Ralph Merley, knew that the first was the voice of Roger Mortimer, and that the second was the voice of Gilbert De Clare, and that the third was the voice of John Gifford. And as they spoke there was a rush, then a brief struggle, then a low but deep shout of triumph. And when they paused from the work of carnage, John de Vesci, John Fitz-John, and Nicholas Segrave were captives; Hugh Despenser, Ralph Basset, and Conan de Gael, despatched by the iron club of Walter the Farrier, were corpses; and De Montfort's soul and body were parting. I watched for some moments with feelings of awe and pity. I observed a few convulsive struggles, a clenching and a relaxing of the hands, an opening and a closing of

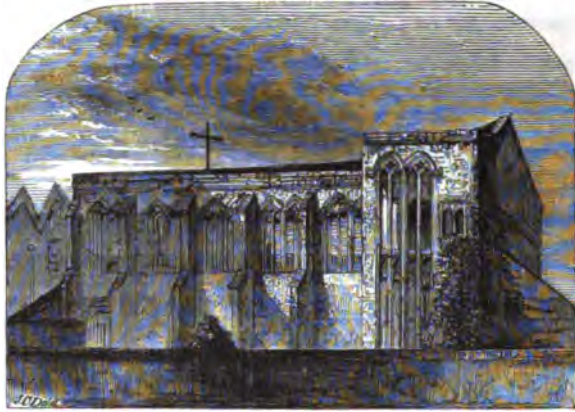
the eyes, an extending and stiffening of the limbs ; and, as a flash of lightning glared on the scene, and a peal of thunder rent the sky and shook the earth, the soul of the great earl went to judgment.

"All is over, my lord," said I, as I rejoined the prince, and the rain began to fall in torrents.

"Ah !" exclaimed Edward, passing his hand over his brow and eyes, as if to banish regret for what could not be remedied, "I would have saved him if I could ; but God's will be done."

"Amen," said I, devoutly.





King John's Palace, Eltham.

## LXII.

### THE COURT AT ELTHAM.

**I**T was the autumn of 1265 ; and Queen Eleanor, having lately landed in England, with her ladies, her son Edmund, her dwarf John, and a guest in the person of Baldwin, the banished Emperor of Constantinople, the king kept his court at the palace of Eltham.

By this time England seemed at peace. After Evesham, the Londoners had hesitated, and the castle of Kenilworth had held out ; but the Londoners, after being brought to reason, escaped with a heavy fine ; and the castle of Kenilworth, after a siege, surrendered to the king.

Such was the state of affairs when the Constable of Hertford, having entered the town of St. Alban's by force, and threatened some of the principal townsmen, was seized and beheaded by the

butchers, and an awkward disturbance arose ; and when I, Ralph Merley, having much exerted myself to aid the prince and Robert de Burnel in their arduous efforts to soothe and conciliate malcontents, was sent to St. Alban's to investigate and to punish. I had just come to the conclusion that both parties had been in the wrong, and fined the town a hundred marks, when I was summoned by Edward to Eltham.

I rode from St. Alban's to Eltham in high spirits. Everything began to wear an aspect of peace. Jack had returned to the plough, Tim to the loom, and Trick to the anvil ; everywhere men seemed to be settling down once more to quiet life ; and it pleased me to find as I passed along, that Gamel Goodrick had restored his hostelry to its ancient state, and that Walter the Farrier had re-established his forge in the Strand.

The day was far spent as I reached the palace, and I thought with interest of the evening banquet in the great hall ; for I knew that with the queen had come the Countess of Salisbury ; and my heart beat at the thought of again meeting the noble demoiselle, whom ever through the varying scenes of an eventful war, I had regarded as my guiding star. Even at this date it is pleasing, if slightly painful, to recal that memorable hour of happiness and of hope.

I found that the palace was crowded, and had some difficulty in finding accommodation. But since Evesham, nobody had dreamt of treating me save with respect. Mortimer and De Clare were already exhibiting much jealousy of each other ; and each was endeavouring to draw me over to his party. Edward's full confidence I was known to possess ; and the king, as if to make amends for former disfavour, treated me with a kindness almost paternal. Nothing, therefore, stood in my way ; and, at a time when another person



would have been pushed aside, I was conducted to apartments hard by those which the king and queen occupied.

Before rushing into court life I was anxious to see Margaret Bisset, and relieve my conscience of the promise made to her brave father when he was on the point of drawing his last breath. I got through my interview with the holy maid, and was making for my own apartments, priding myself on the skill with which I had avoided the infliction of a sermon as to all being vanity—which at the moment I was in no humour to believe—when I encountered Prince Edward, who looked so grave that I instantly perceived something was wrong.

"Welcome to court, Merley," said he, "albeit your stay may be briefer than you expect. I have something to say to you; follow me;" and, having led the way to the matted room in which I had been established, he seated himself, and made a sign to me to do likewise.

"You will be surprised to learn," said he, "that I have made an extraordinary discovery which concerns you."

"What!" asked I, jocularly, "am I in some conspiracy for overturning the king's throne? I learn with regret, my lord, that such accusations are rife."

"No," replied the prince, somewhat seriously; "it is only men who have something which their neighbours covet, or who claim high rewards for services rendered, who are exposed to such charges. As you have little which others can appropriate, and as you ask no rewards, I think you are safe."

"I rejoice to hear it," said I.

"But a truce to jesting," continued the prince. "We have here as a guest the Emperor of Constantinople; and in conversation with him I have discovered that your mother was a kinswoman of his

own, a daughter of the imperial house, whom he would have given to the Sultan of Cogny, but whom Walter Merley, to save her from becoming the bride of an unbeliever, carried off to Cyprus."

"With Harold Hardrada and the Greek princess running in his mind," said I, amazed, but half laughing. "And now I understand how I came to dream of a coronation in the church of St. Sophia. Doubtless my mother described it to me in infancy."

"Most men of aspiring vein would be elated at the discovery of their mother's belonging to an imperial house," remarked the prince, apparently surprised at my cool reception of his news.

"True, my lord," replied I; "but my grandmother inspired me with so much pride as to my pedigree that there is no room in my heart for more."

"I only trust," said the prince, "that you will receive the second part of my intelligence with equal calmness. It has come to my knowledge, though I can hardly credit it, that you have allowed your fancy to rest on a certain noble countess."

"My lord," exclaimed I, "I will explain." But my confusion was such that I could not find words to proceed.

"It is only right," continued the prince, somewhat agitated, "that you should be made aware that she has long been destined for the bride of Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln."

I uttered an exclamation of anger, and with difficulty repressed the imprecations that rose to my lips.

"Be calm, Merley," said Edward, kindly. "Be yourself. Frankly, it is nine years since the match was made in Gascony by their fathers, Edmund de Lacy and William Longsword; and it is almost eight years since Edmund gave ten marks of gold for licence to contract his son in marriage to Longsword's daughter. Now you begin to comprehend the whole; and I know you are man enough to bear

such a disappointment. I now leave you to your reflections, and trust to see you in high feather at the banquet."

"My lord," said I, "I thank you for your frankness ; but, as for the banquet, I pray you to hold me excused."

Edward looked up, and seemed somewhat offended ; but, when he remarked the mortification that was painted on my countenance, his expression changed, and he took my hand.

"Merley," said he, "I knew not that the romance was so serious. It never was my lot to suffer what you now suffer ; but I comprehend what your feelings must be, and I offer you my sympathy. Heed not the banquet ; I will make all excuses. I will not trouble you at present ; but I have tidings which I would fain communicate when you are in a state of mind to listen."

As I sat with head bent forward, and great grief gnawing at my heart, I heard every one of Edward's words as he uttered them ; but I confess I scarcely comprehended their import. When I looked up, the prince was gone, and I was left to my own sad and bitter musings.

Armed as I partly was, I threw myself on my couch and endeavoured to digest my mortification, and summon my pride to my aid. But the effort was vain, and vain I felt it to be. In my misery I believe that I almost prayed to forget all that Edward had just told me about my parentage. Little cared I, at that hour, about the imperial purple or the golden throne. What were such things to a man who felt as if all his hopes, however long cherished, had fled for ever, and all his aspirations, however strongly indulged, had vanished, never to return ? Indeed as my memory recurred to my interview with Margaret Bisset, I almost wished I had listened to her sermon, and repeated to myself in bitterness of soul, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

Hours passed; night set in, and I was, as I fancied, on the point of falling asleep, when I was startled with such a noise from the king's apartments as if all the lions and other wild beasts in the Tower had suddenly been let loose in the palace of Eltham.

I sprang from my couch, and reaching the corridor, attempted to enter; but I found to my consternation that the door was secured. I felt so certain, however, that something terrible was occurring, that I did not hesitate. I placed my shoulder against the door, and, using all my strength, burst it open and broke into the room. As I did so, Margaret Bisset rushed forward, and shrieked out, "Save me!"



## LXIII.

## AN UNWELCOME GUEST.



THE day on which I arrived at Eltham, a strange, gaunt man, with grey hair and a restless eye, found his way into the palace, and suddenly presented himself to the king.

"Henry of Winchester," said he, "resign to me the crown which you unjustly usurped, and so long detained from me."

"What mean you?" asked the king, supposing the intruder to be some jester.

"I mean," was the answer, "that I want my crown. I am your elder brother, and I bear the sign of royalty on my shoulder."

"Begone!" cried the king's servants, interfering, and threatening to beat him.

"Hurt not a person whose talk proves him to be out of his senses," said the king, interposing. "Let the insane man rave as becomes him, for such people's words have not the influence of truth."

"Trouble not your beard about me," said the stranger. "I can take good care of myself if need be."

After some trouble the intruder was expelled from the palace, and

nothing more was thought of the circumstance. It appeared by the result, however, that he was both cunning and vigilant.

The midnight hour was drawing nigh ; the palace was quiet ; the king had retired to the apartments of the queen, and was there conversing with the Emperor Baldwin ; and Margaret Bisset, who was waiting till the queen went to bed, was sitting up reading a religious book by the light of a lamp and singing psalms, when suddenly the same man presented himself, and demanded where the king was to be found.

"Where !" asked he, in a voice of thunder, "is this tyrant—this usurper—this breaker of oaths !" and advancing, he seized the arm of the holy maid, and shook her till she was so alarmed that her screams were heard through the palace.

By this time I had burst open the door, and as I rushed in I recognised, not without horror, my implacable foe, Sir Rufus Ribaut. At the sight of me he left Margaret Bisset, and turned fiercely upon me with his knife. I had to use all my agility, all my dexterity, to save myself from being stabbed. Ere long I succeeded in closing with him and wresting the knife from his hand ; but this did not terminate the danger. Flying at me, he seemed determined to do all that man could with tooth and nail ; and I, finding myself driven to extremity, rushed forward and grappled with him.

And seldom, assuredly, have I known a more desperate struggle. At length I put forth all my strength, and we both fell heavily on the floor. I, however, was uppermost, and in no celestial mood I placed my knee on his chest.

"Madman !" said I, "what do you here !—whom seek you ?—what would you have ?"

"Fiend in human form !" he replied, "it is not to you that I will render an account of my actions."

At that moment the servants of the royal household, alarmed by the cries and noise, appeared and released me from my painful position ; and I, handing him over to their tender mercies, was on the point of withdrawing. As I looked back, they were binding him fast with cords ; but even then, roaring and foaming at the mouth, he shook one of his hands.

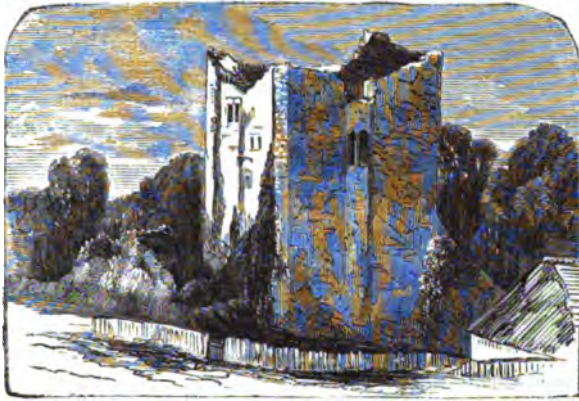
"Fiend !" shouted he, "I will yet baffle all your devices."

"Peace !" said the servants. "You have more need to think of your crimes and repent ; for doubtless you will be sent to Coventry, and dragged by wild horses, to deter others from such crimes as that which you meditated."

I returned to my couch, almost pitying Sir Rufus Ribaut.

"Ill-fated man, what may he have suffered in his day !" said I. "He is stark mad, and it were more fitting to imprison and to soothe than to punish him ; but I suppose the law will take its course ;" and I fell asleep.





Guildford Castle.

## LXIV.

## ALARMS AND MOVEMENTS.

FOR a week I remained at Eltham. During that time I received the thanks of the king and queen for my timely service in saving them from the knife of Sir Rufus Ribaut—a danger of which the Queen's imagination made the most. Moreover, I was formally presented as a kinsman to the Emperor Baldwin; but I did not approach the Countess of Salisbury. Of the prince I saw nothing; he was generally at Guildford, where his wife, Eleanor of Castile, resided with her children; frequently at Westminster; and constantly occupied with affairs; and I supposed he had forgotten my existence. Nor, when I did happen to take my place at the board in the great hall, and when any of the magnates then at court condescended to talk to me, did I manifest the slightest interest in their conversation. Neither of the factions into which the court was



divided made the slightest impression on me; and I felt equally indifferent to Mortimer and De Clare.

In fact, I passed most of my time in solitude, brooding over the misfortune which, I believed, had blighted all my hopes and ruined my career, and vowing either to repair to Constantinople, or as a brother of one of the orders of military monks, or as a simple knight, to take the Cross and fare forth to fight for the Holy Sepulchre.

One morning, however, I was roused from a feverish sleep, and summoned by Philip Lovel to attend the prince without delay; and not without surprise I found Edward arrayed in martial habiliments, and apparently on the point of riding forth on some expedition of importance.

"Merley," said the prince, as I entered, "I trust a week's reflections have been of the benefit I anticipated."

"My lord," I replied, "I would fain hope they may not prove wholly without advantage, since they have led me to the resolution of asking your gracious permission either to accompany my imperial kinsman and fight for the recovery of his crown, or to take the Cross and set out to fight for the Holy Sepulchre. Thanks to my grandmother, I have the means of equipping myself as becomes my rank; and I would fain strike such a blow as an Englishman who can boast of having fought at Evesham should be able to strike either for the throne of the Courtenays, or for my native city, which is in such peril from Bibars Bendocdar, the Mameluke sultan."

"Name not such schemes," said the prince, seriously; "I tell you that it is out of the question. I myself meditate a pilgrimage, armed or unarmed, to the Holy Land; and I tell you frankly," he added—half in earnest, half in jest—"that, so little faith have I in the endurance of some men's friendship for myself and loyalty to

the king, I could not leave England without leaving behind me warriors on whom the king could, in case of emergency, place absolute reliance."

I remembered the dream I had dreamt while asleep on the bench before the White Horse hostelry, and started.

"But," continued the prince, "a truce to such talk for the present, and let me tell you a truth of which you seem unaware, that England is almost in rebellion."

"In rebellion?" exclaimed I, greatly surprised.

"Yes; hearken, and then judge whether or not it is a time for a warrior who fought at Evesham on the right side, to sit down under a willow, or talk of going to the East, because a demoiselle for whom he had a boyish fancy falls to the lot of a man more highly favoured by fortune than himself."

"My lord," said I, "I am all attention."

"First, then, know that Simon de Montfort has thrown himself into the Isle of Axholme with a strong force, and bidden defiance to the royal power."

"He is tempting fate," replied I; "but proceed, my lord."

"Robert Ferrars, Earl of Derby, has raised the standard of revolt at Chesterfield."

"He at least is bent upon completing his ruin."

"Adam Gordon, who proves himself a terrible outlaw, is quartered in Alton Wood, between Wilton and the Castle of Farnham, and is avenging De Montfort's fall by pillaging the lands of the king's adherents right and left."

"I would I had him at close strife for half-an-hour, with none to part us."

"John de Vesci," continued the prince, "has fortified his Northern castle of Alnwick, and his park is a camp."

"I grieve to hear it. Of John de Vesci I expected better things."

"But this," said Edward, "is not all. Llewellyn of Wales has invaded my earldom of Chester, and seized and demolished the castle of Hameclin; and Hamond Lestrangle and Maurice Fitzgerald have allowed themselves to be shamefully beaten and put to flight, leaving many of the king's soldiers dead on the field."

"An unhappy and untimely misfortune," remarked I; "but fortunate in this, as it seems to me, that it can be repaired."

"I am coming to that," replied Edward; "in fact, I have made arrangements for meeting the mischief at various points, without a day's delay. The king to-night marches for Northampton to reduce Simon de Montfort and the insurgents at Axholme. Henry of Cornwall; my cousin, at the same time, marches to encounter the Earl of Derby at Chesterfield. I reserve the outlaw Gordon as my own prize; but, ere dealing with him, I must ride north, and bring De Vesci to submission. My good knights, Sir Patrick Chaworth and Sir Warren Basingbourne, at dawn, led a little army towards Chester to reinforce Lestrangle and Fitzgerald. But this is not enough, under the circumstances. In fact, a captain of depth and engine is required to take the management of the war, without offending Lestrangle and Fitzgerald by seeming to do so; and, Ralph Merley," added the prince, laying his hand on my arm, "thou art the man!"

"My lord," said I, "I am ready."

"I deemed so of you when you heard all; so make your preparations without loss of time. Remember that Llewellyn is no despicable foe, flushed, as he is sure to be, with recent success; and, when you have waited on the king and queen (for kings and queens like not to be neglected), take the road with your Northern horsemen. I leave all to your discretion; and I must ride."

Edward rose as he concluded. I attended him to the courtyard, where men and horses awaited his coming, and where his grey steed was ready to carry him to victory.

"One word ere we part, my lord," said I; "what of this unhappy madman?"

"What of him?"

"I fear his life is in danger; and I would fain save a man who has not sense enough to be responsible for his deeds."

"Impossible!" said the prince; "neither you nor I can save him. He is thought to be more of a criminal than a lunatic; and I half suspect that his attempt last week may have some connection with the movements—if not instigated by some of the least scrupulous—of the insurgents whom we are going to put down."

"That alters the case; and in any other land he would be put to the brake," said I, musingly. "Well it is for him that torture is unknown to our law."

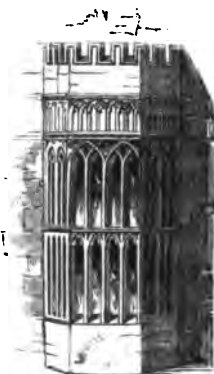
"May it long so continue!" said Edward.

And, as the prince said this, he laid his hand on my shoulder and sprang lightly into the saddle.

"Adieu, Merley," said he, turning, not without sadness; "we may not soon meet again; for the Welsh are troublesome to deal with, and it takes long to bring them to submission. But," added he, "we shall meet, mayhap—indeed, I would fain hope—in days more peaceful and prosperous. Meanwhile, I commend you to God, and may He have you in His holy keeping!"

As he spoke, Edward waved his hand, and the horsemen rode on, the prince's high head towering over all. I watched him as he crossed the moat by the wooden drawbridge, and till his tall form disappeared among the trees in the chase; and I saw him not again till that day when, after coming from hairbreadth escapes and perilous

adventures in the East, he rode into London, amid the cheers of the multitude, to be crowned in the abbey of Westminster with the golden crown of the Confessor, to establish his throne in the hearts of his people, and to realize, in prosperity, those great projects of law and government over which he had brooded in adversity and chains.





Chester Castle

## LXV.

## FAREWELL TO BOYHOOD.

I NEED hardly say that I lost no time in obeying Edward's directions. No sooner, indeed, did the tall head of the prince disappear among the trees in the chase, than I prepared to depart for Chester. In accordance with his suggestion, I went to take leave of the king and queen, and the Emperor of Constantinople.

It was quite clear, at this interview, that I was in high favour both with Henry and Eleanor; and as I took leave I could not help congratulating myself on escaping from the danger of having my name added to the long list of those whom royal favour had, during Henry's long reign, brought to trouble and involved in ruin. As

for my newly-discovered kinsman, I had not conversed with him for a minute without ceasing to wonder that he was in exile.

The king gave me his ideas about making war on the Welsh ; and, by the time I had listened to all that he had to say, my attendants were mounted, and, doubtless, impatient for my appearance. Nor was I in a mood to keep them waiting. With the prospect of action I perceived the prospect of recovering my spirits, and was beginning to feel so much more myself than I had done since the day when the prince communicated the intelligence which had sounded like a warning to leave hope behind, that already I was anticipating the hour of triumph over Llewellyn and the Welsh. Whether with that anticipation blended any vague fancy that, if I returned a conqueror, I might yet overcome circumstances and gratify my heart and my ambition, I do not remember ; but as I, with my helmet on my head and my spur on my heel, issued from the palace to mount, I, with a thrill caused by mingled emotions, found myself face to face with the fair being whose image for more than two years had been ever present to me in my visions by day and my dreams by night.

I was so taken aback, that I should hardly have summoned presence of mind even to speak ; but she, perhaps not wholly unprepared for the meeting, took the initiative.

"Whither rides Sir Ralph Merley ?" asked she, in accents in which I vainly imagined I recognised something like tenderness.

"To the Marches of Wales, noble countess," I answered, almost mechanically.

"Most people would prefer to remain at Eltham."

"Mayhap most people would," answered I, somewhat bitterly ; "but, for my own part, I feel no regret. I have learned too recently the severe lesson that, in the atmosphere of a court, a promise, like

piecrust, is only made to be broken, and that a man's heart is played with as a child plays with a toy."

"I see you are angry with me," said she, seriously.

"Pray deem me incapable of such a want of chivalry."

"Sure I am," she added, "that, when you come to reflect on my position and your own, you will think otherwise than harshly of me, and you will forgive."

"Believe, noble countess," replied I, overcome by the tear in her eye, "I am in no mood to cherish any vindictive feelings. Ill indeed, when on the point of going to battle with the enemies of his country, would it beseem a Christian knight, whose father fought long and bravely for the Cross in Syria and Palestine, to forget the Christian duty of forgiveness."

At that moment, the most trying of my long life, I should certainly have given way to my sadness, had I not been sustained by my pride. In that quality, at least, I was not inferior to any Longsword or Lacy who ever breathed; and it was with an air which even my grandmother would have approved that I added—

"Adieu, noble countess; we may never meet again. Earnestly, however, do I wish you all welfare and happiness; and earnestly do I pray that your life may never for a moment be clouded by the reflection of any misery that may have been prepared for mine."

I bowed low; and, walking to the spot where my men awaited me, sprang on my steed. My heart was sad, indeed, but resolute; and it was with a full determination to conquer myself that I rode through the chase and away from Eltham.

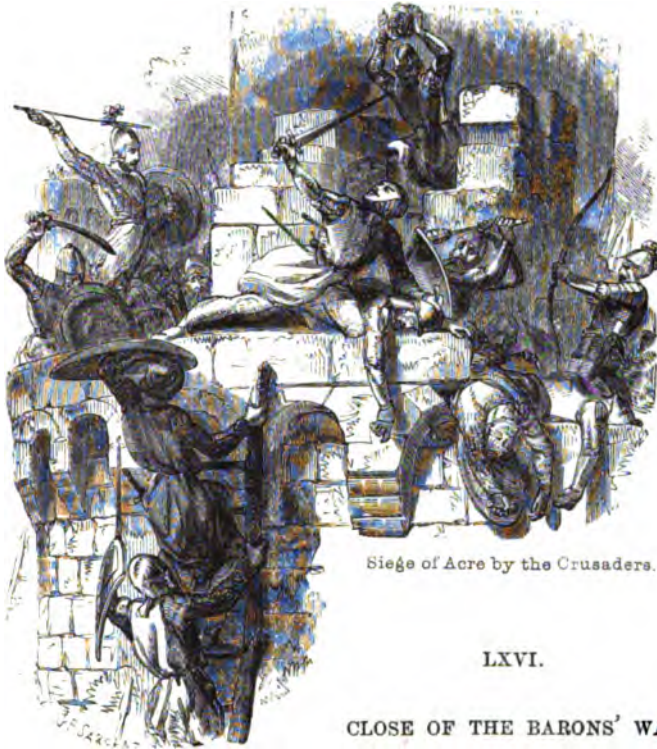
"Now," said I, sternly, "I am a man, and as a man I must think and act. Farewell to my hopes and to romance. Farewell for ever to my boyhood, with all its dreams and delusions."

As I soliloquized I turned suddenly in my saddle, vainly imagining



that I might catch a last glimpse of the woman I adored. It was too late, however; and we met not again till her doleful widowhood, when I was, in the king's name, ruling a mighty province with a popularity and power which no Bigod or Bohun enjoyed and exercised in his earldom, and recommending to the king that policy which baffled the faithless cunning of Philip of France and the subtle craft of Boniface of Rome.





**F**ORMIDABLE as appeared the insurrections of the malcontent barons throughout England, they soon yielded to the genius and valour of Prince Edward, and the efforts of the king's friends.

At Chesterfield, Henry of Cornwall defeated the Earl of Derby; and the luckless baron, having been betrayed by a woman, was found lurking in a church, and taken prisoner. At the same time Edward, as he had anticipated, was perfectly successful in the North; and, having taken the Castle of Alnwick, and so dealt with John de Vesci

that the young Anglo-Norman baron became one of the prince's staunchest friends, he returned South to encounter Adam Gordon.

I ought to mention that Adam Gordon was a native of Poitou, and a warrior of gigantic prowess. Confident in his strength, he defied all foes, and vowed that if it came to the worst, his life should cost the lives of ten of his enemies. Edward, however, was destined to prove that there was, at least, one man in England who did not fear a single combat with the outlaw champion ; in fact, the prince desired nothing more ardently.

It appears that when Edward went to Alton Wood, Gordon was, by accident, cut off from his followers, and that his fate seemed to be sealed.

"We have him !" cried the prince's men, as they prepared to rush forward and secure him.

"Remain where you are," said Edward, waving them back. "You do not suppose that I fear an encounter, or that I would take odds against a single antagonist ?"

Dismounting as he spoke, Edward drew his sword, leaped over a dyke that intervened, and instantly engaged Gordon in a hand-to-hand conflict : and forthwith among the trees of Alton Wood took place one of the fiercest struggles that England ever saw. Both combatants exerted to the utmost their marvellous dexterity and strength. Long and resolutely they fought without either gaining the advantage. At length, however, Edward brought the gigantic champion to his knee, and having spared his life, carried him to the queen, who was then at Guildford, obtained his pardon from the king, and so completely won his heart, that to the end of his life he faithfully served his conqueror in war and peace.

Nor after having converted John de Vesci and Adam Gordon from foes to friends, did Edward cease his efforts to restore peace to

England. As new dangers arose, his courage and energy were found sufficient to meet them; and every insurrection was resolutely but temperately put down. At the Isle of Axholme, young Simon de Montfort held out stubbornly, and vain did the king find every attempt to force him to submission. As the year drew towards a close, however, the prince took the command of the operations, and speedily reduced the insurgents to such straits, that they yielded about Christmas.

Meanwhile I, Ralph Merley, had reached Chester, joined my force with that of Lestrangle and Fitzgerald, and, in company with the vanquished barons—burning, naturally enough, to redeem their defeat—advanced upon Llewellyn and the Welsh. The result was not flattering to Cambrian pride. Indeed, I felt towards the Celtic warriors a Saxon's aversion and contempt; and I may say, without vanity, that on that autumn morning, when Llewellyn fled from a field covered with the dead and the dying, and pursued by my Northern horse, he acknowledged, with bitter humiliation, that there was no hope of dealing with me as he had done with Lestrangle and Fitzgerald.

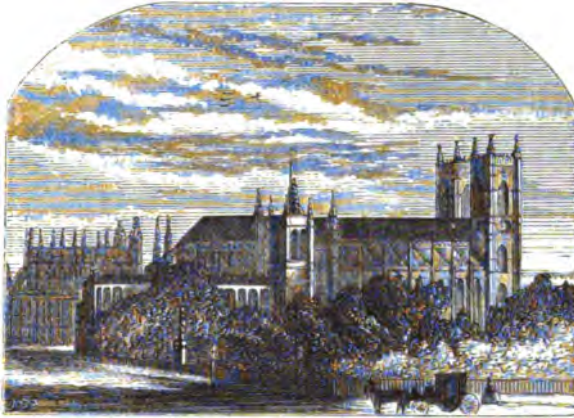
But the lesson was soon forgotten. For a time, indeed, nothing was heard within the Welsh borders but weeping and woe. Unwilling, however, to bend to the English yoke, encouraged by the seizure of the Isle of Ely, and by the foolish outbreak of Gilbert de Clare, who assembled an army, marched to London, and threatened the kingdom with a new war—encouraged by these events, I say—the Welsh, deluding themselves with the vain notion that they were descended from the Trojans, and that they were emulating the valour of their ancestors, and Llewellyn, hoping against hope, attempted a fresh incursion. But he and they soon found how rashly it had been done, and had reason to rue their rashness.

Never was inroad so utterly unprovoked—never was inroad more thoroughly punished. Indeed, I inflicted so signal a defeat on that semi-barbarous host, that their warriors sat down and wailed like women ; their bishops pined and died of sorrow ; their ancient pride of nobility faded ; and even the harp of the ecclesiastic was turned to grief and lamentation. Then, and not till then, Llewellyn asked for peace.

It was time, indeed ; for the king was no longer to be trifled with. In fact, Edward, having made his way into the Isle of Ely and dispersed the insurgents, had hastened to London and compelled Gilbert de Clare to abandon his enterprise. Not an enemy to the crown now remained in arms throughout England ; and, determined to make Llewellyn submit, as other partisans of De Montfort had submitted, Henry, without having heard of the recent inroad of the Welsh, much less of the terrible result, had arrived with an army at Shrewsbury. By this time the Welsh were quite cowed ; and Llewellyn, having sent messengers to the king with an offer of thirty-two thousand pounds sterling, obtained peace and the restoration of the lands of four cantareds, which I had seized. This virtually put an end to the Barons' War ; and Prince Edward, having soon after taken the Cross and left England to accompany the saintly Louis of France to the Crusade, I was summoned to London, and intrusted with the command of the armed men destined, in the event of Henry's death, to prevent any outbreak on the part of the still discontented democracy of the capital. My reception at Westminster was all that I could have wished. The king, now old and infirm, expressed high gratification at having near him a warrior on whose loyalty and friendship he could rely, and the queen was equally gracious.

"By God's head ! Sir Ralph Merley," said Henry, "I rejoice

again to see your face. I have been surrounded by men who, without having done anything to save my life or my crown, have asked



Westminster Abbey.

me for everything but the two, and who would rise against me to-morrow if they could foresee any advantage to themselves in so doing."

"And, sir knight," said Eleanor, "I am as much annoyed by the citizens as ever; though, now that you are here, I know they will not try again to drown me as a witch."

"Madam," replied I, "rest assured that while I am intrusted with the duty of keeping the Londoners in order, they are not likely to be guilty of any outrage on queen or ladies."

"But hear my grievance," continued Eleanor, with much enthusiasm. "Some time since the king granted me the custody of London Bridge for six years; and already they are complaining loudly; for, they say, the queen taketh all the tolls, and careth not how the bridge is kept."

"Ah, madam," replied I, to whom the complaint of the citizens appeared particularly reasonable, "that is a somewhat weighty

matter, and one which rather calls for the interference of a venerable statesman than a young warrior."

"Speak of the devil and he will appear," exclaimed the queen, merrily ; for with the feeling of security she had, since her return to England, recovered much of her gaiety ; and as she spoke, Walter de Merton was announced.

"My lord the king," said the venerable man, "I have news from the East."

"I trust it is good news," said the king.

"Good, good !" replied Merton. "The prince has relieved Acre, taken Nazareth, and defeated Bibars Bendocdar at a place named Kakhow."

"I would fain hope that, after such successes, Edward will return to England," said the king, longingly.

I, too, could not but hope so ; for to me it appeared that Henry might die any day, and could not live long.

"Sir knight," said Walter de Merton, as together we left the king "let me warn you not to sleep at your post, or if you do, to sleep in your harness."

"Whom or what fear you, my lord ?" asked I.

"The unquiet spirits of the capital. They only await the hour when the king breathes his last to create a riot, which possibly, in the new king's absence, might end in a rebellion."

"My lord," I said, "I doubt not the extent of the danger, nor do I wish to treat it lightly. But all I ask is legal authority to act in case of need, and I will answer for the demagogues of London giving you little trouble. Sorry, in truth, should I feel to be under the necessity of striking a blow. But, assuredly, if they break the peace I will break their heads ; and, if they create a riot, by the Holy

Cross, I will play such a part in that game, that they will have no heart for a rebellion !”

I left Walter de Merton, and that evening conveyed my men, by water, from Westminster to the Tower. On Wednesday, the 16th of November, 1272, Henry III. departed this life. But no riot took place. Even Stephen Fitz-Scrob, again at liberty, and eager for mischief, was daunted by the tramp of my cavalry. Without the slightest opposition, the proclamation of Edward took place at the New Temple and at other places ; and the new reign began.

“ It seems that the rabble would not mind rising in a mass,” said Walter the Farrier, who came to the Tower that day on duty.

“ For their own sakes I hope they will not.”

“ They, doubtless, fear you,” remarked the Farrier ; “ but their demagogues tell them that your bark is worse than your bite.”

“ Do they, indeed ?” said I. “ I fancy Llewellyn of Wales could tell another story.”







Old London Bridge.

## LXVII.

## KING EDWARD COMES.

**I**T was a bright day in the month of August, 1274 ; and King Edward, having landed in England, and visited Warren at his castle of Reigate, and De Clare at his castle of Tunbridge, was about to enter London.

Before going to the Holy Land, Edward had prevailed on Henry to restore the city's charter, which had been forfeited ; and, since, a great change had gradually taken place in popular feeling. By this time, indeed, the capital was loyal to enthusiasm. The new king's victories in the East had flattered the national pride ; the instruction he had sent from the Continent to the Council of Regency had assured the nation that justice was to be administered in an im-

partial spirit and with a strong hand; and crowds assembled to welcome him on his return. The river was covered with boats and gay barges; the populace thronged the streets; the citizens, with their wives and daughters, looked from windows and roofs; the houses were gaily hung with silks and tapestry; wine flowed in bucketfuls; the municipal functionaries manifested their loyalty by throwing handfuls of gold and silver to the multitude; and men, women, and children of all ranks shouted, with enthusiasm, "Long live the king!"

From early morn that day, I, Ralph Merley, had been in the saddle, with half a hundred horsemen at my back—not to keep down the populace, for of that there was no longer any need—but to preserve order, without which there might have been accidents involving loss of life. My exertions had been quite successful; and, everything having gone on smoothly, I found myself near London Bridge, musing over the events that had wrought such a change in popular sentiment since the time when the Londoners threatened to drown the queen of England as a witch, and when we, in retaliation, chased their militia from the downs of Lewes. At this instant the crowd raised a loud shout of "King Edward comes! Long live the king!"

"No chance of a commotion this day, comrade," remarked Oscar the Scot, who had survived the effect of the wound inflicted by me before Lewes, but, as his limping gait proved, without recovering from its consequences.

"A commotion?" replied Stephen Fitz-Scrob, to whom the remark was addressed—"who dreams of a commotion? No more hope of such a thing than of you recovering from your lameness. Beshrew me, if I begin not to feel every inch a royalist."

"What!" asked the Scot, "deem you that the day for mischief has so clean gone?"

"Yea," answered Fitz-Scrob, "as certainly as is the blazing star which, in 1264, frightened all the old women out of their senses."

As the dialogue was going on, I reined back my horse to watch the procession as it passed; and, as I did so, Edward and his queen—the gentle Eleanor of Castile—supported on one side by Warren, on the other by De Clare, appeared, with his head uncovered, and riding Grey Lyard, now white with years.

I was so struck with the change in the king's appearance—for his hair, formerly almost flaxen, was now dark; and his face, formerly so fair, was burnt brown by the Eastern sun—that I scarcely could add my cheer to the shout that rose from the immense multitude. But I observed Earl Warren look towards me, and then direct the king's attention to the spot. No sooner had the earl done so than the king reined in his horse; and, as he halted, all the prelates, peers, and knights who formed that grand procession came to a halt.

I advanced at a sign, which was virtually a command; and I did so with a beating heart. In truth, I believe that, at the moment, I would sooner have undertaken to put down another De Montfort than appear so prominently on such an occasion. But the king soon put me at my ease.

"I have much to speak of, my friend," said he, after a kindly greeting. "I would fain tell you how matters are in your native city of Acre. Fail not, therefore, to come speedily to Westminster."

I drew back to the place I had previously occupied; and, as the procession moved on, many a feudal magnate in passing cast eyes on me with undisguised curiosity.

"Who is he?" asked William de Mandeville, whose father, a stanch ally of De Montfort, had fallen before the charge of my Northern horse in that ever-memorable battle by the waters of the Avon.

"A knight who fought by the king's side at Lewes and at Evesham," answered Earl Warren, in a tone of malice which made the young baron change colour.

"The knight to whom I spoke," said Edward—who, when in the company of De Montfort's old partisans, relished no allusion to bygone days—"is a man whom any wise king would delight to honour; for he never shrinks from a duty, and never asks a favour."

As the long procession proceeded towards Westminster, and as I gathered in my men to return to the Tower, I was joined by Sir Patrick Chaworth.

"Merley," said the knight, who never forgot the period of our peril at Northampton, "who could have foreseen such a day as this when we stood before the altar with Hugh Bisset, and swore to pull De Montfort down?"

"Pardon me," replied I; "I ever foretold that such a day would surely come."

"Ay, now that I remember, you did," he said. "But, however, it is clear—at least, it so seems to me—that we are unlikely to have either a Lewes or an Evesham in this reign."

"No," replied I; "for the present, at least, there is an end of adventures in the Barons' Wars."

LONDON :  
SAVILL AND EDWARDS, PRINTERS, CHANDOS-STREET,  
COVENT GARDEN.









